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GEORGE SELDING.

BY

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GEORGE SELDING.

CHAPTER I.

——So the fire-works were burned out, and the *fête champetre* was at an end! The scene of these short-lived joys was filled with a dense black smoke, and the company all prepared for departure. The valets shouted for the different carriages—the coachmen's voices were as loud in return—the riders galloped about, terrifying the foot-passengers, while the torches that were intended to give aid, rather increased the confusion, by the flickering shadows that were cast from the trees.

In the midst of this bustle, there was heard, all of a sudden, a lamentable shriek; for a coach, in which there were three ladies, had struck on the

root of a tree—had lost a wheel, and was, of course, overturned. The horses reared, and threatened to run away, while the by-standers, instead of rendering assistance, provided for their own safety, and dispersed in every direction. At that moment, a young man, remarkably well mounted, galloped up, threw himself from his horse, seized the reins, (for the coachman was unable to attend his duty,) and, as soon as he had secured the furious animals, so that no farther accident could occur, he hastened to extricate the ladies.

A handsome young girl was the first to throw herself into George Selding's arms, and he carried her gently and safely to a bank of mossy turf. Meanwhile, others had been shamed out of their neglect, and had assisted an elderly lady out of the carriage; but, when Selding returned, there was a third sufferer, whose situation had been the most awkward, having been undermost in the overturn, though she had not uttered one word of complaint. She was a tall, slim, and yet very graceful figure, who, without the interference of any one, had raised herself to the coach-door, then would only accept of his arm to enable her to jump down from the steps. When they had cleared the

crowd round the carriage, she thanked him cordially, and in a tone of sincere gratitude, for his attention. Her voice was so soft and engaging, that he wished earnestly to continue the conversation; but she joined her two friends, who talked loudly enough of the adventure they had encountered, and attracted notice from all the by-standers. When Selding came up, they united in overpowering him with thanks, and with praise of his readiness and politeness.

From their language and manner, he perceived that they were persons of good rank, and rejoiced at having made their acquaintance, more especially when, by the light of the passing torches, he convinced himself that the young lady whom he had first rescued was truly beautiful. Even the elderly matron had yet more than the remains of great personal attractions.

In short, Selding was quite delighted with this whole rencontre; and as the carriage was, for the present, *hors de combat*, it was agreed that the party should walk home together. Of course, Selding offered himself as an escort, for the servants must be left behind to look after the broken equipage. He gave his right arm to the old la-

dy; her daughter (for such appeared to be the relationship) took the other; the silent girl followed,—still as silent as before,—and so they proceeded through the woods. Luckily, the moon, which had been till now invisible, broke out, illumining the quiet romantic landscape;—the beauty's soft hand rested confidentially on Selding's arm; and when he spoke, he caught, by the silvery light, the glance of her eye, beaming kindly and encouragingly on him. This unexpected acquaintance, that seemed even at first like old friendship,—the mild pleasant weather,—the deep stillness that reigned around them,—all contributed to rouse in Selding's mind an extraordinary mood of imagination. When at last they had arrived at the ladies' house, he would have taken leave, but was requested to walk in and partake of a *petit souper*. This offer was far too agreeable to his feelings to be refused, and Selding was accordingly shown into a very handsomely furnished saloon, with tall glass doors, opening into a garden, and admitting the soft moonlight and fragrance of rich exotic flowers, so that his first visit was made under the most promising auspices. A servant brought candles, and the party sat down. The

tall silent girl, however, after a few words whispered in her ear by the elder lady, immediately withdrew; and then followed by degrees, mutual questions and disclosures of title and rank. Selding found that he was in the house of a widow, whose name was not unknown to him, for she had been married to a distinguished civil officer at Vienna; Louisa, the gay blooming young lady, was her daughter, and the other, who appeared so timid and reserved, her niece. The ladies, in their turn, ascertained that Selding was the only son of a rich banker; that he had been abroad on his travels, and had returned a few weeks ago, in order to take the management of his father's business, who died during his absence. So they conversed together very cordially for about an hour. Amelia, the niece, came now and then into the room, seeming to have the management of household affairs; and, at last, refreshments were placed on the table. Louisa did the honours, and endeavoured, not without success, to make herself agreeable, while her cousin, as before, scarcely spoke. The old lady was also somewhat reserved, but Selding and Lousia found so much to say, that he was astonished when twelve o'clock struck, and

warned him that it was time to depart. He apologized for having remained so late,—was kindly invited to repeat his visit, and, full of self-congratulation and flattering hopes, he pursued his way homewards by the pleasant moonlight.

In the course of the next day, he did not fail to make inquiries among his acquaintances on the subject which was now more interesting to him than any other,—that of the character and circumstances of his new friend Madam von Fernburg. He found that this lady, before her husband's death, had been accustomed to a life of much gaiety and expence; they had a very large house, and kept up a grand establishment. Of late years, however, being restricted to a narrow income, she had voluntarily retired from the world, still cherishing hopes that the beauty of her daughter Louisa might attract some rich admirer, and that, by her marriage, the family might be restored to the circles in which they had been accustomed to move. Selding heard this last inuendo with indifference, believing such reports only in so far as it suited his own humour; and, in a few days, he went again to pay his *devoirs* at Madam von Fernburg's villa.

He was received politely, and with evident satisfaction. It was evening, and a small party happened to be already assembled. Some card-tables were placed in a garden saloon, while the young people amused themselves wandering about through the beautiful avenues. At length, as the air grew chill, and twilight declined, the tables were removed into the house; where Louisa seated herself at the piano-forte, and delighted every one, but most of all Selding, by her voice and musical execution. Such evening parties afterwards took place frequently, till, by degrees, the young banker felt himself quite at home in the house, and the ladies began to look on him more as a confidential friend or relation, than a stranger. He was always chosen for their companion when they drove out. Madame von Fernburg used then to sit on one side, Selding on the other, and Louisa in the middle. In this manner they were accustomed to appear in the *Prater*, and all other favourite resorts of the *beau monde*, from which Louisa could never long remain absent. Two months passed away in this agreeable intercourse, during which time Selding became more and more deeply in love.

Louisa seemed to treat him with great kindness; her mother kept aloof with a degree of *hauteur*, that might be, perhaps, more affected than real. Only one circumstance rather vexed our hero, which was, that not the slightest precaution had been taken to conceal the circumstances in which he now stood with regard to the family. Such happiness as he enjoyed, from the favour shown to him, would have been heightened tenfold, if a veil of mystery had been thrown over his pleasures; his delicacy was hurt, because others did not enter into these feelings, and he began to reflect seriously on his present situation, and what his prospects were for the future. The plan of offering Louisa his hand, and of sharing with her his weal and woe for the rest of his life, had no doubt many attractions; but he would not act rashly; he wished of course to ascertain, whether the young lady, with whom he was to enter into this indissoluble engagement, really possessed those qualifications which would render him happy in domestic life. He commenced a system of more watchful observance, and made her undergo several petty trials, of which, of course, the conclusion was favourable, for both the mother and the daugh-

ter perceived at once the aim he had in view, and were on their guard. The result proved, that Louisa's character, was, in short, the very model of all virtues; it was she who kept the house in good order; she made, with her own hands, all her fine dresses; was an affectionate nurse to her aunt, whenever the latter happened to be in bad health; for amusements, dress, and company were all forgotten, if an opportunity occurred for rendering any of her friends a service. Whatever he heard and discovered was favourable to his own wishes, and yet there were certain inexplicable misgivings in his own heart, which prevented him from being perfectly satisfied.

He had been so much occupied with Louisa, that her cousin Amelia had been through the whole time quite neglected. Of her he knew no more than that she seemed a quiet inoffensive girl, who never intruded her society or conversation on any one, but seemed altogether absorbed in her own thoughts or duties. When company came to the villa, she appeared very seldom, never joined her relations in the carriage when they drove out, and never accepted, or indeed received, invitations to balls or banquets. In short, the

part that she played was in the lowest degree humble and subservient. Soon after his first introduction, Selding had been surprised at all this, and had made inquiries. He was answered that she did not like being in a crowd,—that she was averse to society, dress, and amusements, so that the greatest favour in her estimation was to be left quite undisturbed and alone. At last he ceased to ask any farther questions, but one evening when he had finished his letters at the counting-house sooner than usual, and came earlier than he was expected, to visit Louisa, he found that both she and her mother were absent; they had gone to visit an invalid friend. Amelia was sitting alone in the saloon employed on her needle work. She received him with politeness; and he began to talk with her merely for the sake of pastime, for he did not expect much pleasure from such a dialogue. For want of a better subject, he began to praise the work on which she was employed, which happened to be a very fine embroidered gown. "It is for my cousin," said Amelia. Selding felt confused, and the conversation rather flagged. By degrees, however, it was revived, and became in-

teresting; for they talked of the newest literary publications. Amelia knew them all; but it was not merely with title-pages that she was acquainted, she had read the books, and thoroughly understood their contents. Selding was astonished to find such correct judgment and such deep feeling combined with modesty the most retiring and pretensionless. The whole hour that passed away before Louisa came, vanished like a moment, and when at last he was placed as usual with her and her mother, he could not refrain from expressing his astonishment at the good sense and admirable acquirements of Amelia.

Some days after this, on a beautiful autumnal evening, it happened that he came in his open carriage, in order to take the ladies for a drive to the *Prater*. Having arrived there, they alighted, and seated themselves in an arbour, where they soon found that the air was very cool. Louisa, moreover, had left her shawl at home. On this discovery, Selding instantly mounted the box of his phaeton, and drove away to fetch it. On his arrival at the country-house, he went across the outer court towards the saloon. No one observed him; but, from the drawing-

room, there arose sounds of music so delightful, that they completely rivetted his attention. He heard the piano-forte played, perhaps, with less artificial skill than that with which Louisa could have touched it—but with a degree of expression and feeling, to which she, however, would have been wholly unequal. With the notes, at last mingled a gentle *contre alt* voice,—and a song followed, of which both the words and the melody were to Selding quite irresistible. He was all ear—all sensibility. When the tones had declined away, he stepped nearer, and now, in the twilight of departing day, which, contending with the moon, shone with a mysterious effect into the room, he saw Amelia sitting at the piano-forte. Her eyes were uplifted as in prayer,—they were suffused with tears, in which the moonlight shone reflected. Her fingers glided over the keys, and seemed to express the echo of those feelings which had passed through her mind. For a while Selding remained stedfastly gazing at her. He found that her features had a power and tenderness of expression, which, though she was not a regular beauty, made her highly attractive. Her figure and carriage, too, were very graceful, and

he could not imagine how all this should have till now escaped his observation. At last he softly retired, then advanced for the second time with quick steps, as if he had only just then arrived. Amelia started up from her chair, and came to meet him, visibly embarrassed. Selding, too, was rather confused, and explained the commission on which he had come, awkwardly enough—however, she went and brought him the shawl. When he had taken it in his hand, and should have gone, he lingered, looking at her anxiously, as if he had still somewhat to say. At last he stammered out—" I know not if I should venture to confess to you that I have been very impolite; yet I am by no means disposed to repent of my conduct." Amelia seemed astonished. " I listened when you could have no presentiment that any one was near you, and heard the most beautiful, the most divine music!" She blushed deeply, " That was not fair—that was not what I should have expected from you, Herr von Selding." " It is but too true," answered he, " and I have to beg your forgiveness—yet I cannot repent what I have done, since it has convinced me of what I had long suspected, that

you are possessed of many accomplishments which you carefully conceal." Now he proceeded with an ardour, which evidently was heartfelt, and not the result of ordinary *politesse*, to express his admiration, till he perceived that Amelia, whose hand he had held all the while, trembled, and that she seemed agitated to a degree which he had by no means expected. She answered him timidly in as few words as possible, and begged of him to begone, as Louisa would wonder what detained him. At last he obeyed, taking leave by kissing her hand respectfully, and returned to the ladies in the *Prater*. They had been exceedingly perplexed by his long absence; he related freely and without disguise what had occurred; and it was obvious that they were much disconcerted by his confession. Louisa thought proper to complain of a bad cold which she had caught by being so long exposed to the frosty air without her shawl; her mother seemed lost in reflection. Selding, too, was more silent than usual, and occupied with his own thoughts;—they soon returned home, and after this adventure, Amelia was less than ever seen in the household.

The poor girl, from the very first moment in

which Selding came to extricate her from the coach, had been prepossessed in his favour, and henceforward could never forget him. His agreeable person—his cultivated understanding—still more, that unequivocal goodness of heart which was manifest in every feature and every tone of his voice, had awoke kindred chords in her mind, and she felt that, with this man for a husband, she could have been unspeakably happy, though it was already certain that he was lost to her for ever. Every one must have observed that he loved her cousin, and even if she could sometimes have doubted this, Louisa took care to mark by her conduct that she looked on Selding as her accepted wooer—almost as a betrothed husband. What greatly increased her sorrow, was the probability that Selding, in his estimate of Louisa's character, had been completely deceived, and would never arrive at that happiness in the married state which he no doubt expected. She had formed a thousand plans for warning him without betraying herself—but she was obliged to give up all of them in despair. She saw, with great pain, that she could not here be of any service whatever, and bore with this cause of sorrow, like many others which she was obliged to endure in

her aunt's house, without a murmur. Already she began to feel a melancholy kind of composure in these thoughts, when the scene at the piano-forte, and the admiration which Selding had obviously betrayed, once more raised a tempest of conflicting emotions in her breast, which nights of watching, and floods of tears, were not sufficient to allay.

Selding, meanwhile, had not the most distant suspicion of what he had done. He merely contemplated Amelia (when she did appear,) with increased interest, and drew comparisons betwixt her and Louisa, which did not always turn out in favour of the latter. It happened, before long, that Louisa made her appearance in a new and very tasteful dress, which was much admired, and every one praised both the richness of the silk, and the fashion in which it was made. "All this is Louisa's own work," said Madame von Fernburg; "she is her own milliner and embroiderer!" Selding's attention was roused—he examined the dress more narrowly—thought he remembered it; and, in a few moments, became convinced that it was the very same on which he had seen Amelia at work a few days before. This detection of a downright

falsehood vexed him exceedingly ; he was all that evening out of humour, and, for the future, continued more than ever on the watch, so that circumstances were observed, which otherwise would have escaped him altogether. In Louisa he found pretension to accomplishments which she did not possess, while her mother betrayed selfish views, with a good share of vanity, and worldly-minded ostentation. His heart, therefore, became gradually colder towards them ; and, in proportion as this mood gained ground, he became, of course, more inclined to think favourably of Amelia. For two days, the latter did not at all make her appearance ; but as she had often absented herself before now, this did not disturb him, till the second evening, when he inquired anxiously what had become of her ? " Oh the poor girl !" and " poor Amelia !" answered Madame von Fernburg, and Louisa in the same breath, giving to their tone as much of sympathizing interest as they were able.

Selding was terrified. " What means this ?" said he ; " what has happened to her ?" " She was employed yesterday morning to bring some heavy lumber out of the store-room," said Louisa; " the bundle was rather large ; she could not see

the steps, and so fell down stairs." "But the hurt was very trifling," added Madame von Fernburg; "only a sprained ancle, for which reason, out of precaution, I would not let her rise to-day."

Selding was indeed much struck with this incident, and did not make any attempt to conceal the impression that it had made on him. Accordingly, the mother and daughter perceived at once the line of conduct which they must now adopt. They could not have concealed the accident—they dared not cross the young man in his present humour,—and therefore began to praise Amelia for her good nature and readiness to give, in their house, all the assistance of which she was capable, and so forth. On Selding, however, these words were thrown away; for all the while he was contemplating, "in his mind's eye," the poor Amelia falling down stairs with her heavy burden; and this image blended strangely with the well-remembered scene at the piano-forte, in the lonely drawing-room by moonlight. He began to comprehend the real circumstances under which she was situated in this house, and to reflect what might be the sufferings of a poor orphan beneath the roof of wealthy relations, so that an earnest wish to assist her was

now added to other feelings which had gradually and unawares obtained an influence over his heart.

At present, he offered to send his own surgeon, who was one of the most celebrated in Vienna, and they thought themselves obliged to accept this offer with an appearance of great thankfulness. Selding proposed to shorten his visit, in order that the doctor might arrive as soon as possible. They considered this unnecessary; but he followed his own plans, and went accordingly. Within an hour, the surgeon came with Selding's valet, who was ordered to bring back information to his master; and the accounts received were quite satisfactory.

Next morning, however, he sent again, and about twelve o'clock arrived himself, when he was given to understand that the whole affair was a mere bagatelle, unworthy of the notice that had been taken of it. He was piqued at this reproof, so directly aimed at himself, and became silent. Louisa pouted—the mother looked displeased—and his visit was much shorter than usual.

In a few days, Amelia was allowed to make her appearance, and Selding expressed the utmost pleasure at seeing her—tried to lead her into conversation—and insisted on hearing the particulars

of her late accident, not being in the least disconcerted, though Madame von Fernburg and Louisa both looked offended by his conduct. Now, as on former occasions, there were numberless household commissions which Amelia was forced to execute. She was constantly ordered to go hither and thither, nor did any one seem to remark that so much walking must be both painful and injurious. This appeared to Selding in the highest degree cruel and unjust—he started up several times to bring what was wanted, and spare Amelia her trouble. A grateful look from the poor girl was his reward; but, ere long, some orders were given in a whisper, in consequence of which, she was obliged to remain the whole evening out of the room, so that, for this visit, Selding saw no more of her.

The next was Louisa's birth-day, and, like all other anniversaries in this house, it was celebrated in the presence of a large party. On account of the very beautiful weather, there was to be this time a grand *dejeuné à la fourchette* in the garden, at which the guests appeared in their gayest attire, and were exceedingly merry, while Louisa figured in a brilliant dress as the queen of the

festival. Amelia was, as usual, much employed, and was ordered to run, times without number, to and fro between the house and the garden, so that, notwithstanding all her cousin's charms, heightened as they now were by her splendid apparel, it was impossible to fetter Selding's attention, even for a moment, so as to prevent his feeling more than ever for the distresses of the humble and submissive orphan. He could not help admiring the steady composure with which she fulfilled every task, and the self-command with which she concealed her sufferings from the party. From him, however, they were not concealed, and he took every opportunity of smoothing her difficulties as far as it lay in his power; but Louisa kept him so incessantly occupied by directing all her discourse to him, that once it escaped his notice, when Madame von Fernburg had sent her to the house for a rare exotic plant, which had been one of Selding's birth-day presents, and which some of the party expressed a wish to see. At last, when he chanced to look round, Amelia was tottering down the front steps with an immense flower-pot in her arms, which was evidently more than she could bear. He started, and ran to

assist her; took the flower-pot, which he supported on his left arm, while, with his right hand, he led her gracefully down stairs. She looked at him;—surprise, gratitude, and somewhat of a yet more tender feeling shone from her eyes. "How can I sufficiently thank you?" said she, in a low soft tone, while a deep blush came over her features. That look penetrated into Selding's heart;—he could not help pressing her hand, and he was aware that she trembled. When they rejoined the party, he brought her a chair, and said, in a voice that Madame von Fernburg could not but overhear—"Now, Mademoiselle Amelia, I must insist, that, for the rest of this day, you will sit still and spare yourself. If any more commissions are to be executed, you will be so good as to call on some of your next neighbours. Every one of the party will, I am sure, feel himself delighted, if, by this means, he can render *you* any service." At these words, Madame von Fernburg bit her lips; Louisa darted at him a look of contemptuous rage, but endeavoured to play her part as if quite unconcerned, and drew a circle round her for a game at questions and forfeits, while, during the bustle

which this occasioned, Amelia seized the opportunity to retire unobserved. Selding, however, had remained on the watch, and as soon as she quitted her place, was ready to offer his arm, and walk with her. As they advanced, he saw by a stolen glance, that tears glistened in her eyes ; he caught her hand, and pressed it fervently to his heart. She was again much agitated ; but Selding ascribed this only to her natural timidity, and the painful impresssion of the scenes that she had so lately encountered. When they had entered the saloon, however, and he was about to retire, a deadly paleness came over her countenance; she tottered, and would have fainted, had he not caught her in his arms, and carried her to a sofa in Louisa's *boudoir*. Blushing, and utterly confounded, Amelia could not speak, but, at that moment, it was evident from her looks that she loved him, and after this silent confession, she could not help bursting into tears. " My dearest Amelia," said Selding, " be assured that I am fully aware of your hard fate in the world ; but you may believe also, that not only do I thus feel deeply for your situation, but will try every means in my power to relieve you from it." He had

again taken her hand, but she now drew it back, and wept more passionately. "I thank you, Herr von Selding," said she at last, in a faltering voice; "I am, indeed, deeply sensible of your generosity and goodness of heart; but you do not know the consequences of your absence just now from my aunt's party, and I beg that you will not speak to me any more—nay, I implore that you will go!"—Sobs here impeded her utterance. Selding felt dreadfully agitated; he was about to answer, but she hid her face in her handkerchief, and made a sign, by a wave of her hand, that he must leave her. He obeyed at last, though with great reluctance, and returned to the garden perplexed and *distrait*.

As for Amelia, her feelings were at this moment almost insupportably painful. Thrown off her guard by his tender and respectful attentions, she had given way to the impulses of her own heart—she had betrayed to him her prepossession in his favour, almost as plainly as any language could have expressed it—and now, instead of meeting with reciprocal affection, she heard only assurances of his compassion and generous sympathy for her distresses. Shame, wounded

pride, and unrequited affection, were emotions that she could not endure; she would have wished to fly from her present abode, and hide herself from him, and from all the world for ever. How could she bear in future the sight of that man, to whom she had revealed all the deepest mysteries of her own heart, and who had treated her in return with pity, which, alas! is almost ever allied to contempt! She was altogether mistaken, however, for Selding really loved her; but this pure and rational attachment was so different in character from that which he had hitherto felt for Louisa, that he himself was yet unaware of the truth, and had formed no estimate how very dear Amelia had become to him, till mere chance fanned up the concealed embers into flame.

For a long time Amelia had indeed suffered much from the persecution and mortifications to which she was subjected in her aunt's house. The latter had promised to take into protection her orphan niece, and to treat her like a favourite daughter; instead of which, the poor girl's life had been more unhappy than that of an ordinary servant; therefore the design of leaving her present residence had been long familiar to her mind;

and it was now become her fixed resolve to put her scheme as soon as possible into execution. Though she had indeed no fortune, yet she was very certain of her own capacity to obtain a livelihood by needle-work, or by giving instructions, so that, although in narrow circumstances, she might still be independent. No suitable opportunity, however, had yet occurred for carrying such designs into execution; and though she had a guardian, —a man of good character, and the strictest integrity, yet, as she knew that he was not affluent, she could not, consistently with her feelings of delicacy, resolve at once to leave her aunt's house. After she had met with Selding, too, perhaps the wish to be near to him had more influence in detaining her, than she herself was aware of; but, meanwhile, she made the utmost exertions, not only to fulfil all her duties, but even to exceed the measure of labour imposed on her, in order that she might, by this means, compensate to these cold-hearted friends for any favours that they bestowed on her, which otherwise she could not have accepted from them. Quite unexpectedly, however, Madame von Fernburg began of her own accord to speak of Amelia's removal; she ap-

peared to wish for it, and said openly, that, as her daughter's marriage was now to take place in a short time, and she would give up keeping house on her own account, it would be impossible for her to offer accommodation to her niece any longer. She suggested, therefore, that the latter should look round her for a suitable place, as a governess, or companion to a lady of fortune; and she herself tried to effect this purpose, by writing letters to Amelia's guardian: in short, the unhappy girl felt that they were most anxious for her departure. She could not fail to guess the cause of all this, and perhaps a slight feeling of triumph, and of contempt for these narrow-minded and selfish relations, lessened in some measure the sufferings which their unkindness might otherwise have caused. Such were her situation and prospects, when that adventure happened on Louisa's birth day, and from this moment onwards, her resolution was unalterably fixed. The painful feelings of conflicting love and offended pride, which weighed on her existence, and almost wore out the springs of life, overbalanced all cautious reflections; she determined, at every risk, to leave

her aunt's house, and cut off, for ever more, the possibility of a meeting with Selding. Under the pressure of these emotions, she wrote to her guardian, and conjured him by all that he held most dear and sacred, instantly to take measures for her removal, and that he would now afford her that asylum in his house, which he had long before offered. Her letter betrayed so evidently the disordered and irritated state of her mind, that the worthy man became quite alarmed for the safety of his ward, suspecting that she must have been treated with the greatest harshness. Of course, he agreed to her proposal, and sent her the address of a friend in Vienna, who intended setting out in a few days for Prague, (his own place of residence,) and who would conduct Amelia safely thither. He added, in the kindest manner, that in his family, she would not fail to meet with all the affection and care which she had a good right to expect from her aunt, though in that quarter she had been so cruelly disappointed. Quite rejoiced on the arrival of this letter, she hastened with it to Madame von Fernburg, who was also so well satisfied, to be rid on any

terms of a rival who stood in her daughter's way, that she provided, at her own expence, all requisites for Amelia's comfort on the journey, which was appointed to take place on the third day after this conversation.

CHAPTER II.

Selding still cherishing those impressions which his last meeting with Amelia had produced, and firmly determined that he would break off all intercourse with Louisa, had continued his visits however,—though with intentions very different from those which he had formerly entertained. Amelia, meanwhile, never once appeared. Her late accident still afforded her a pretext for keeping to her own room, and thus she avoided all risk of meeting with her lover. Madame von Fernburg was by no means displeased, if her niece's sprained ancle, which, through the day, did not in the least hinder her attention to household duties, regularly became worse at night, so that she was obliged to confine herself; and Selding alone felt bitterly the absence of a beloved object, who, since that decisive interview, had become every hour more and more dear to him. In such

manner, several days passed over, and he found himself obliged to undertake a journey of considerable length, on account of business, which had already been too long delayed. Amelia knew this, and had reckoned on the event of his absence for the execution of her own plans.

The day before his departure, he thought himself sure of seeing her yet once more, but she did not appear; he therefore laid aside all reserve, and begged of Louisa that she would obtain for him an interview with her cousin, as he could not think of leaving Vienna, to be absent for several days, perhaps weeks, without having taken leave of Mademoiselle Amelia. Louisa seemed in exceedingly bad humour; she rose, however, and went to deliver Selding's message. Amelia was much embarrassed; she could not with propriety refuse the request now made to her, though she trembled at the thoughts of any meeting with Selding; most of all, however, at a *tête-à-tête*. She chose of two difficulties what seemed the least, and went with Louisa into the saloon. Selding hastened to meet her, but he was terrified at the paleness of her complexion, and the expression of melancholy which prevailed in her

whole demeanour. With the most heart-felt anxiety, he made inquiries after her health, and betrayed his affection so unequivocally, that Louisa and her mother, were exasperated to the utmost degree, and Amelia became so confused and distressed, that her answers were cold, forced, and awkward. Even Selding at last was silent, though, as to the terror which she felt, he knew nothing of it, nor had he any suspicion of that attachment, which she thought, had been fully made known at their last interview. On the contrary, he suffered cruelly from the belief, that she was by no means so favourably disposed towards him as formerly.

Selding had already been two days absent when the letter arrived from Amelia's guardian, and she immediately made preparations to leave all her present connections for ever. In spite of her prudent resolves, this step cost her far more pain than she had expected. The night before her departure was spent sleepless, and in tears. She thought there might possibly have been some misunderstanding, that ought to have been cleared up, and repented her rashness now when it was too late. So, in due time, her carriage was brought to the

door; she departed, and had been received with great kindness in her guardian's house, long before Selding's return to Vienna, who little suspected the change that had taken place in his absence.

Of course, his first visit, after he arrived, was to the house of Madame von Fernburg. Timid and reserved, as a true lover must ever be, he abstained for some time from inquiring after Amelia, but was every moment in hopes that she would enter the room, or that he might catch a glimpse of her well-known form gliding through the garden. The mother and daughter did not fail to observe his emotion, and to guess the cause of it; besides, they had a malicious pleasure in waiting for his questions, and in the anticipation of his surprise and disappointment. In this they were not deceived. When the truth actually came upon him, he was at first so thunder-struck, that he could not articulate one word. This astonishment, however, was so rapidly succeeded by indignation, and suspicions (but too well-founded) of the plans that had been adopted against him, that if they could have read what passed in his mind, their triumph would have been of very short duration.

In truth, he more than suspected all that had

occurred. He had no doubt that her flight, had been the result of constraint and violence on their part, and was most anxious to learn where she had taken refuge. He felt also that he himself had been, in all probability, the cause of Amelia's present sufferings, and this apprehension was, to his generous heart, almost insupportable. Self-reproach, anger, love, and pity, conflicted in his mind. He was now fully aware of his own attachment to Amelia—he became conscious that he could not live without her—and that he must discover, at all risks, the place of her retirement, even if he were to set out for this purpose, like one of the knights of the olden time, and rely on mere chance for his success. That she was really living in the house of her guardian at Prague, he did not believe, for at this time he distrusted all that was said to him; but that this person might know what had become of her seemed very probable; and, in the first place, he determined to make a trial in that quarter. His love for Amelia was such that it even rendered him prudent. He spoke so cautiously with Madame von Fernburg, that he obtained all the information he wished for as to her niece's guardian, without betraying to her what

he now intended to do. But, on the following morning, at an early hour, his post-horses were in readiness, and in a little time, he was far on his way to the Polish frontiers.

Arrived at Prague, he hastened instantly to the house, of which he had already received a description; but as to the question, whether Amelia was really living here,—it was one which he never thought of asking, so thoroughly was he convinced that he had been misinformed on that point. He, therefore, only said to the maid-servant that he wished to speak with her master for a few minutes, on particular business. While she went up stairs, he walked without ceremony into a parlour below, of which the door stood open, and the first object that met his eyes here was Amelia, who started up, with a half-suppressed shriek, from her tambour-frame,—then stood at the table motionless like a statue.

Selding, too, was confounded, but joy prevailed over all other sensations. "Amelia!" cried he, in a tone of rapture, and advancing with open arms, "you are indeed here! I have found again that happiness which seemed lost to me for ever!" "Herr von Selding," said she, endeavour-

ing, but in vain, to speak in a firm voice, "to what extraordinary accident am I indebted for this visit?" "There has been no accident," said he, drawing nearer, and taking her hand, which he respectfully pressed to his lips; "I sought for you—I would have sought all the world through till I had the delight of thus meeting again—and for your sake alone I have come hither." She looked at him doubtfully—a rapturous but transient gleam of hope awoke in her mind—her timid eyes encountered his, and she wished to have said a few words dictated by her own feelings; but all at once the form of Louisa seemed to glide into the room, and stand threatening before her. "Herr von Selding," said she, with all the composure that she was able to assume, "you are the betrothed bride of my cousin!" He frowned darkly, and let her hand drop. "Is this all," answered he, "that you have to say to me after our long separation?" She was silent, and he added, "I was never betrothed to your cousin, and I never shall be so!" "Nay," answered Amelia, "must I think, then, that all her own assertions were unfounded? Have I not heard——" "I know not," interrupted Selding, "what Louisa may

have said to you. As a man, whose honour and integrity have never been impeached, I can affirm that I have not even made to her any declaration of attachment. I do not deny that I admired your cousin at the commencement of our acquaintance; but as to real affection, it was then a feeling unknown to my heart. Through my whole life, I have never loved but once," added he, with great fervour, " and I well know, Amelia, that I shall never love any one but you!" Amelia's heart was too full to allow of her returning any answer—she could not look up, and tears fell fast through her long silken eyelashes. Selding thought, but was not sure, that she returned his cordial pressure of the hand. He honoured this timidity, and wished that she should have time for recollection.—meanwhile he ventured to add, " Amelia, dare I cherish hopes at least, that you—that you do not hate me?" At these words her eyes were raised, and met the full and radiant expression of love that shone in his looks—her doubts and hesitation were at once conquered,—she sank into his arms. " Augustus—dear Augustus!" cried she; but this was all that she could say, and her tears flowed unceasingly. Augustus was Selding's

Christian name; she had never heard it pronounced aloud by himself, or by any one, though she had used it often in soliloquy;—and the tone of these few syllables was enough—they spoke volumes to his heart. "Will you then be mine?" cried he, "will you consent to share in my fortunes?" "Herr von Selding," said she, again assuming composure, "the time since you first became acquainted with me has been far too short—you cannot yet have judged fairly of my character. For this reason, and because I am not wholly mistress of my own actions, I dare not answer your question." "Dearest Amelia," said he, "I must not be too violent or impatient,—but I have had ample proofs in your aunt's house,—that with you, any man who was not utterly depraved would be happy. I know that I myself would be unspeakably blest. It is true indeed, that you have had no sufficient experience whether my character is good or bad, and, in your aunt's society, I may have often appeared worse than I really am. But, Amelia, believe me, I am not *very* wicked,—nor need you be afraid to trust yourself to my care."

At this moment they heard steps in the anti-

room, and before Amelia could recover any appearance of tranquillity, her guardian entered, expecting to find only the stranger who had requested an audience. Selding took her hand, and led her forward to meet their venerable host, who, after a short explanation, understood, to his own great satisfaction, the connection existing between his beloved ward, and the young prosperous banker. Only a few days more were required to remove that objection which Amelia had started, namely, the want of sufficient time for Selding to convince himself that he did not choose his wife rashly, and without a proper knowledge of her temper and disposition. All doubts, however, were soon cleared away; they were both in love; their confidence in each other was unbounded; and they could not imagine it possible that any circumstance could ever disturb that perfect harmony which at present existed between them.

Along with Amelia's guardian, Selding now made all the requisite arrangements for his future mode of life. The good old man, whose heart had been completely won by our hero's open and honourable conduct, expressed his triumph and delight at being able to entrust her worldly

welfare into such good hands,—and before a month had elapsed, the happy lovers were publicly betrothed. Selding went to Vienna, in order to make due preparations for the reception of his intended bride, and as soon as this business was over, he came back to Prague,—the marriage was solemnized,—a fortnight after which, to the astonishment of all the beau monde, and the unspeakable vexation of Madame von Fernburg and Louisa, he made his appearance with his young wife in the Austrian capital.

Louisa and her mother were immediately on the alert, aided by all the aunts and cousins, with other *soi disant* friends, who used to visit at their house, and began industriously to spread the most wicked and malicious reports against Amelia. Not only did they wish to destroy her character, and that of her husband, in public estimation, but they laid some very sagacious plans for stirring up domestic dissension between their unconscious victims—all which endeavours, however, proved completely abortive. Amelia was, indeed, not a little discomposed and alarmed at these proceedings; but she had always loved retirement, and there was nothing she now wished for so much as to be forgotten by, and for-

get the world, and to live only for her dear Augustus. He also was enraptured with this mode of life. Their conversation, when left alone, seemed quite inexhaustible, for their acquaintance, properly speaking, had lasted only six weeks; yet, before that time, they had so many feelings in unison and sympathy with each other, which had never been imparted! Especially, it was Amelia's delight when she could now freely confess to him, that from the first moment when they were brought together by the overturn of the carriage in the wood—he had not been indifferent to her; how often she had involuntarily envied her cousin, who so little deserved her good fortune. Above all, what had been her feelings that evening when Selding surprised her at the piano-forte, and evinced towards her such unaffected admiration and tender compassion! Selding, on the other hand, had to describe to her how he had first been distressed at the painful situation she endured in her aunt's house—how this emotion had changed into wonder and respect—then into ardent love—and what despair he had to combat at her sudden disappearance, though even this had not been more formidable than her cold reserve on the day

that he came to take leave. So, for this happy couple, the hours flew away like moments. They lived for themselves alone, seeing no company either at home or abroad, unless when it was absolutely indispensable, and cherished delightful visionary hopes that this happiness would last for ever!

CHAPTER III.

At length, as all enjoyments in this world must one day or another lose the zest of novelty, such conversations began, for Selding at least, to become rather less attractive. He now bethought himself of some very worthy and faithful friends, whom he had of course forgotten during the raptures of his honey-moon. He felt that, after the tiresome business of the counting-house had engrossed him through the day, his mind required some variety, some indulgence more *piquant* than the repetition of dialogues to which he had already listened more than a hundred times. He had fully reckoned on Amelia's opinion in this respect being the same with his own; at all events, he felt convinced, that her disposition was far too pliant to admit of any opposition to his wishes. On the contrary, however, she heard the first suggestions of her husband on this subject with a

degree of vexation,—with a kind of instinctive terror and apprehension rather, which was something very different from what he had wished or expected.

She herself had yet felt no blank,—no wish for change; her husband's society was always enough; his presence was to her more than the whole world without him could supply. Meanwhile, in her solitary hours, she combated, as well as she could, the painful impression, which his wish for company had left on her mind. The thought that she might, at all events, contribute to his happiness, overcame every objection. She even did violence to her own sincerity, and put on the mask of cheerfulness, in receiving the guests whom he afterwards brought to the house. Their circle was gradually enlarged, and Selding seemed to take much pleasure in this new mode of life. At first, he had only invited two friends; this number soon multiplied into four; this again into six, and so onwards, till a party of ten or twelve, was the usual complement. At last, one worthy guest was invited to bring his wife, another his sister, and so forth,—till Amelia saw herself involved in female society, which, after the

knowledge of the world which she had gained in her aunt's house, she would gladly have avoided altogether. In return, she was of course invited to parties, which, without being actually rude, she dared not refuse. Refreshments and *petits soupers* were introduced, at which there were always much laughter and merriment, so that the *friends* did not separate till a late hour, and never without making promises for another meeting; while Selding, who was the richest individual among them, found that the agreeable duty of giving the entertainment at his own house, fell to his share oftener than to that of any one else. Amelia was thus betrayed into a vortex, from which she had no means of escaping. Almost with horror, she looked on the contrast made by her present mode of life, with that fairy picture of domestic peace and contentment, on which she had delighted to dwell, and which had been realized indeed, but for a short interval, in order to make her feel with more acuteness the direful reverse of fortune. She strove, but in vain, to banish these sad reflections,—she could not help questioning herself on the causes and probable effects of this change. Every conclusion drawn, added

bitterness to her present discontent, and augmented tenfold the gloom of her prospects for the future. With inexpressible pain and mortification, she was obliged to acknowledge the difference of opinions subsisting betwixt herself and her husband; she could not possibly approve his taste in pleasure; she was quite unable to change her own; and after some faint endeavours to bring him back to his former mode of life, which of course proved in vain, she gave up the point, almost with a feeling of bitter pride in her own consciousness of right, and began to doubt whether he really loved her. She now reflected on the manner in which his acquaintance with her had arisen,—on his former atachment to Louisa, and decided, that it was only the charm of novelty which had any power over his mind. On this principle, she was no longer at any loss to account for the sudden transfer of his affections; for the rash impetuosity with which he had entered into a marriage contract with herself; or, finally, for that irritability and ennui which, alas! he now betrayed, whenever they were left alone together. With a kind of obstinate and triumphant spirit, she persisted in this opinion. To

no one in the world, however, and least of all to her husband, would she have confided these thoughts, by which her own heart was chilled and almost broken; indeed such had been the habits of life to which she had been inured at her aunt's house, of bearing unjust treatment without a murmur, that she did not even wish for a confidant.

Amelia continued, therefore, to suffer in silence; but her temper and mood of mind, even her looks were changed. Her husband perceived all this, and, as kindly as he could, begged her to explain the cause. Convinced as she was that a true lover would never have found it requisite to ask this question, but would have guessed—would have *known* intuitively the source of her melancholy,—quite aware also that if there were in his heart any remains of his former attachment, complaints and reproaches would assuredly extinguish the last glimmering embers, she was on her guard, and would by no means reveal the truth. She had recourse to pretexts and excuses which sounded plausibly enough, promising that she would behave better for the future, and resist that melancholy which had unawares stolen over her.

To all appearance, indeed, she did so. For a few days she forced herself to seem cheerful, and even rejoiced in the thought that, by this means, she had satisfied her husband, whose cold heart had never once suspected the truth; nor did she wish that her sincere and unalterable love should now be known to him.

In a short time after this, she felt aware that she must ere long become a mother; and this prospect, which, if she had been still conscious of possessing Selding's love, would have afforded her the utmost delight, now excited in her mind a strange and harassing conflict of emotion. At intervals, it seemed not wholly impossible that the birth of her child might effect a new bond of union betwixt them; that his declining affection might again be kindled by the natural emotions of a father,—so that a transient gleam of cheerfulness returned;—but in order to cherish these delightful, though faint hopes, which would have been dispersed in the confusion of motley society, —yielding also to her natural disposition to retirement, she began to withdraw more and more from the gay circles which her husband had forced her to encounter. Selding of course remarked

this; he was exceedingly dissatisfied, and remonstrated. On her explaining the cause, however, he seemed at once overjoyed and angry with himself,—he even fell at her feet, and humbly besought her forgiveness; consequently, for a few days, she indulged in the flattering dream, that he indeed loved her as much as ever. But, ere long, she could not help reverting to her old reflections; she considered whether all this appearance of returning affection did not result from the mere zest of novelty;—from the unwonted ideas of the care due to her present situation, and that he would soon be a father; nor did Augustus conduct himself in a manner likely to efface this impression. Though, when they were alone together, his manners were in the utmost degree kind and cordial, yet he was wholly unable to resist for any length of time his inclination for jovial parties and dissipation. That ruinous passion for mixed society soon returned with double force, and as he could not fail to perceive that Amelia's health was such as to preclude her from joining often in his pleasures, he became more and more disposed to think that he had a free right to enjoy them alone. Therefore he used very fre-

quently to leave his own house in the evenings; he did not return till a late hour; and was thus convinced of what would have a little while ago seemed impossible,—that he could find entertainment, and partake of pleasures even in places where Amelia was not, and could not be present. Society always gained on him more and more; for of course a young man of his influence and fortune was a welcome guest in every careless and licentious circle; the bands by which he was detained out of doors became always more powerful, and those of his own fireside weaker; so that his wife's temper and spirits gradually wore out. This last circumstance afforded, of course, no inducement for him to stay at home; and Amelia, fully persuaded that she was in the right, would not in the slightest degree swerve from her own opinions or mode of conduct. Besides, the perfect and thorough conviction, that the last glimmering sparks of affection for her had now died out in her husband's bosom, made her less careful than she had formerly been to disguise her real sentiments. Therefore, when he returned late from his jovial banquets, she received him coldly;—she continued grave and silent. Her

tears indeed were concealed, though she wept incessantly when alone. She did not hide them *now*, from the fear of losing his affection as before, but rather from pride, that he might not see how very dearly she still loved him. Never, therefore, did she allow the slightest word of complaint to escape from her lips; but violent disputes occurred many times about mere trifles, to which she was obliged to have recourse as a pretext, when her bitter vexation could not any longer be subdued; and Selding perceived, to his astonishment, that Amelia was by no means that mild, patient, all-enduring character which she had appeared to him when under the tyrannical power of her aunt.

So then it happened that, step by step, from one dispute to another, these two hearts, that were once so loving, and whose feelings were so completely in unison, became at length altogether hostile and at variance. Selding, vexed and discontented at the discovery he had made, that Amelia, instead of appearing always pliant, complaisant, and cheerful, could persist in being gloomy, cold, and, as he thought, resentful and heartless, was now less willing than ever to stay at his own house; and as he was solely devoted to pleasure,

without one idea of duty or self-control, of course, most of his time was consumed either in the unavoidable care of his counting-house, or in riotous parties.

Among his numerous and motley companions, there was one distinguished from all the rest by his politeness and knowledge of the world, named Benkwitz, a native of Prussia. Selding's attention and good will were particularly attracted by this man, who seemed to him, of all his associates, the person whose acquaintance was most worth cultivating. Benkwitz, however, was at first somewhat reserved in his manner, and the banker's invitations, either to his own house, or to tavern-parties and pleasure gardens, were not always accepted. At last, he seemed as if he were convinced that Selding was a very worthy man, and a cordial friendship was established between them, such as is not often exemplified, and which was, at least on our hero's part, quite unaffected and sincere. He took the first opportunity of communicating to Amelia, what a treasure he had found in the acquaintance of this elegant and accomplished Prussian; but, to his great mortification, he soon perceived that here also, as in so many other in-

stances, her taste was the most opposite that could be imagined to his own. The cold politeness and assumed *maniére* of the stranger, contrasted too strongly with Amelia's straight forward sincerity and real kindness of heart. With a dark foreboding of evil, which she could scarcely have explained to herself, she watched the dominion which this man had obtained over her husband's mind. She thought herself quite certain that Benkwitz had plans in view, which he most carefully concealed under the most specious exterior; and it was not without great effort that she could bring herself to treat him with even common civility.

The first time that she was afterwards alone with Augustus, (which, indeed, now seldom happened,) she spoke with him regarding Benkwitz, and with the utmost caution and delicacy, tried to make him look on this man with at least some share of her own suspicions. Very soon, however, she had the pain of ascertaining, as on many former occasions, that her attempts were altogether fruitless. Her husband's heart was colder and more completely closed against her than ever. At first, he treated her doubts and fears as mere childish caprice, and, at last, he answered her in a chill

sarcastic tone, bordering on harshness, and proving that all her hopes were in vain.

Nor indeed were her evil forebodings as to Benkwitz's character without foundation; for the disposition which Augustus now betrayed to his wife, was in great measure caused by this man's interference. He had not failed to observe the unfavourable impression that he had made on Amelia. He was afraid of her penetrating glances, and watchful care of her husband's welfare; therefore took measures to prepare Selding's mind beforehand, for that expostulation which he had no doubt would take place, and which had happened accordingly. By Selding's own confessions, which were quite unguarded, he had learned the changed state of his new friend's domestic circumstances, had perceived in one moment the real character of the banker and his wife,—on which he did not fail confidently to build his own plans. He contrived to withdraw Selding's affections more and more from Amelia, throwing the conduct of the latter into the darkest possible shade, so that his misrepresentations made a deep impression on a mind already irritated, and the bitterness and distrust between the now miserable couple were every day increased.

At length, however, Amelia became a mother. Exhausted as she was by long-continued and suppressed grief, she yet bore this trial with wonderful strength and firmness ; but her weakness afterwards was such, that it seemed doubtful if she would ever recover ;—and the danger was averted only by the delight which it gave her to perceive the new influences of paternal affection on Selding's mind.

That mutual tenderness which had been so long unknown betwixt them, was again renewed ; the misunderstandings which had arisen, chiefly from want of due confidence and explanation, were gradually clearing away, without any regular effort for that purpose, when the cold-hearted, malevolent Benkwitz, came forward once more, like a demon, to destroy all the good that had been gained ! Selding had no chance against this man's thorough self-possession, and depth of deceit ; Benkwitz found means to revive all his former propensities to dissipation and licentious pleasures ; he persuaded him, that Amelia's affection was but mere pretence, for the sake of acquiring a complete dominion over her husband ; as to her extreme weakness, this also was a deception, in or-

der that his fears for her safety might induce him to withdraw from agreeable society. This abominable plan succeeded ; for Selding, though he did not believe all, was persuaded that there was a great share of truth in what was alleged by his friend Benkwitz, for whom he still had a great respect. At every interview with his wife he became colder, at least more guarded in his expressions ; at length he insisted that, as soon as her health was re-established, she should join with him in the wonted circles of society from which she had so long been absent. Amelia promised that she would do so for the future, only for the present excused herself on account of her weak health, which rendered it impossible for her to bear any fatigue ; but Selding was inclined to look upon this as a mere pretext. Amelia felt exceedingly vexed at his mistrust, and expressed her vexation. Selding, who thought that her bitter expressions arose from a consciousness that his accusation had been well founded, now repeated the demands which he had before made. Amelia in the most determined tone absolutely refused them ; this led to a violent altercation, and Selding parted from her as he had never done before,

with his heart full of anger and resentment. Benkwitz exerted himself night and day to keep the wounds open which he had thus inflicted; nay, he poured poison into them, so as to taint the whole existence of his victim. As to Amelia's sufferings, they were yet deeper and more dangerous, but she never complained; her grief wore on in silence and unmarked by any one.

Selding had now lost altogether that cheerful humour which had before been natural to him;—Benkwitz said that he felt it to be his duty if possible to rouse him from this mood; and he therefore took his friend with him to the gaming-table. As usual, on such occasions, Selding commenced by winning some trifling sums, but at last came off a loser to an amount that was indeed no trifle. This deprived him completely of whatever remains of self-possession and good spirits had been left to him. In the worst possible humour, with his brows lowering and contracted,—always silent and reserved, he seldom made his appearance at his own house, which, alas! no longer appeared to him an asylum where peace and happiness awaited him. Shame and self-reproach now fettered his tongue, and estranged him more than

ever from his wife. It was only with Benkwitz that he spoke freely, and this elegant sympathising friend never failed to provide him with balm for his sorrows, or at all events dissipation and distraction of thought at the banquet or card-table. So, for a few months, life was dragged toilsomely on, amid constant disputes, and under the heavy burden of concealed sorrow. Both parties were convinced that Providence never had intended them for each other—that they had married rashly and without due knowledge of their mutual dispositions; consequently, Benkwitz now found the long wished-for opportunity to wind up his schemes, —to give as it were the *coup de grace* to his unfortunate victims. When in company with Selding, he dropped divers hints how very possible it might be to break the bonds of a marriage in all respects so unsuitable. He added that an individual like Amelia, who had already withdrawn herself from the society of her husband, would probably not suffer by a result of this kind, but that such an arrangement would on the contrary be very agreeable to her own wishes. Selding's pride was roused; his heart was filled with the bitterest resentment, and Benkwitz accordingly led him on

to a mode of conduct, which, considering the previous state of Amelia's feelings, must of necessity give her far more provocation than before. Another violent dispute followed between the deluded husband and his unfortunate wife. The words "separation for ever" were pronounced—this fearful condition was fixed, and on both sides —unalterably.

Yet as the words passed from their lips, both involuntarily shuddered; but a false shame made them conceal what they suffered at that moment. The first decisive step was now taken, and other measures followed of course. Amelia's heart seemed now broken; she thought it was impossible to live; but summoned up all her pride and consciousness of rectitude to support her spirits. Finally, in a calm well-written letter, she only begged her husband's permission that she might retain her child, who, at that age, so much required a mother's tender care and protection. Selding was much agitated when he read this letter—his resolution began to waver; but Benkwitz was never long absent. He took care to repress every better impulse in his victim's mind, so that an answer was dispatched, in which there prevailed a style of

cold politeness, without even the slightest token of regret or affection. He agreed that Amelia should have the care of her child only on this condition—that it might be sent to his house once every day—and enclosed her a formal settlement of an ample provision for her expences. Her answer was written in a manner, if possible, still more cold and more polite. As to her yearly income, she fixed it to be only one-half the proposed sum; adding, that if she had any fortune, however limited, to maintain herself and her child, she would not, after the moment of leaving his house, have accepted the smallest aid, or have been in any degree troublesome to him.

The day was appointed on which this plan was to be carried into effect, and she awaited with the feelings of a condemned criminal the dreadful hour which was to separate her *for ever* from all that in this world she held dear. By a great effort of courage and resolution, her health was prevented from sinking in this struggle; but her deadly paleness, and changed features, must have betrayed to her infatuated husband the hazard she now run, had it not been determined on both sides that they were not to meet.

On the day when Amelia took her departure from his house, Selding intentionally staid out till a very late hour. On his entrance, the servant gave him a packet, of which he eagerly broke the seal,—it contained only the key of Amelia's writing desk. Midnight was now past; but he hastened into her room. The silence—the desolate appearance of this apartment, even as if this had been the funeral day of its former inmate—the scene, too, where he had so often been happy—had a powerful influence on his feelings. He tried the key which opened her writing-table, for he had flattered himself with faint hopes that he would here discover some farewell letter—some token that her affection for him was not altogether passed away. He found nothing more, however, than the keys belonging to the house, with a slip of written parchment, for a direction, tied to each—a catalogue of all the plate, linen, even wine and other stores, with her account-books, in which were regularly noted even the smallest sums that she had distributed. There was also a remnant of the money which he had given her for house-keeping. With a kind of horror, he surveyed all these; but, still hoping to find the wished-for letter, he

had recourse to a chest of drawers, in one of which he found almost all her jewels,—every present that he had made her in happier days; nothing but a single ring and a locket was wanting. Yet no! there should have been among the rest a miniature portrait of himself, richly set in gold, and surrounded with brilliants. He sought for this a long while in vain; at last, under a heap of other ornaments, (for his gifts of this kind to Amelia had been very numerous,) he found the gold frame and the brilliants; but the portrait was wanting! The tears started into his eyes—he was deeply affected—and in vain, through the remaining wearisome hours of the night, did he endeavour to rest.

On the following morning, Benkwitz came to breakfast with him; he remarked Selding's melancholy, and did not fail, with his usual cunning, to discover the cause. As on former occasions, too, he considered it his duty to rouse Selding from this mood; and, in the end, he took the latter away with him to the gaming-table. Indeed, the unhappy man went thither without reluctance, in hopes that, in the wild passions excited by high play, he might overcome the reproaches of his own conscience. For some time he again won small

sums. Benkwitz's instigation, and the varieties of the game continued to lead him on, till, as it might have been expected, fortune became adverse, and now he proceeded obstinately, as if to extort a compensation of his losses, which were soon formidable and heavy. Even already, his affairs and his credit with the public had suffered a severe shock. He was well aware of this; but, fearing to break the spell which, for the present, protected him from feelings still more painful, he willingly closed his eyes against all prudential considerations, and rushed deeper and deeper into the vortex of dissipation. To what other method could he have recourse, now when every moment spent in solitude was torture, and to look back on the past, or onwards to the future, was alike hopeless and intolerable. His child was sent daily to visit him, and the few minutes that such visits lasted, were the best that his life could now afford. Oftentimes, when caressing the poor infant, he wished fervently in his heart that it were possible for him to recal the pleasures of his former days. Yet, in spite of these conflicts, and notwithstanding the respect which he could not help feel-

ing for Amelia, he still thought himself fully assured that he could not any longer have been happy with her, and that their separation was both prudent and indispensable.

CHAPTER IV.

A WHOLE year had past over in this manner. Amelia lived quite secluded from the world in a retired part of the suburbs, where she rented a small house and garden. The care of her child, the culture of plants and flowers, reading, needlework, and sometimes a visit from a neighbouring lady who had been her companion in early life, made out the humble round of her employments and diversions. The bitter pangs of separation, which for some days she thought it was impossible to outlive, gradually declined into a mood of calm melancholy. Only the sincerest and most disinterested affection for her lost deluded husband still survived, and shed its solitary light through the dense clouds of indifference and apathy by which her life was overshadowed. She reflected on her own conduct; she discovered clearly the errors of which she had been guilty;—with-

out forgetting her husband's faults, she perceived that he might have demanded of her much more concession and indulgence than she had shown. She repented her too great irritability ; her want of prudence, and of due consideration for his wayward temper,—now looking on her melancholy lot as a just punishment, which she ought to bear with equanimity and resignation. Above all, she resolved that, if her child's life were spared, she would instruct him in such manner, that he might never inherit the faults which had made his parents so miserable.

There was, besides the little Gustavus, one bond of intercourse yet unbroken betwixt Amelia and her husband ;—this was the attendance of their mutual physician and friend Zornau, a worthy benevolent man, who had tried every means in his power to prevent their separation, and saw, with real grief, that his endeavours were in vain. Till now, his visits to Selding had proceeded from motives of friendship only, not from the necessity of exercising his medical skill;—but that firm constitution, which had long resisted the effects of dissipation, and the wasting influence of ungovernable passions, began at length to totter,

and Zornau's counsel was very often required. When attacks of illness confined Selding to his own apartments, he felt, of course, in a double degree, the mournful solitude in which he now lived, and the cold selfishness of his worldly-minded friends, not one of whom, except Benkwitz, came to visit him. At last it happened, during a severe paroxysm, when both in mind and body he was completely exhausted, that his old book-keeper, almost by force, brought him to examine his accounts; and the result was, that his fortune, once so ample, had already been overdrawn and dispersed—in a word, that he must look on himself as a ruined man. Selding was exceedingly exasperated by this new discovery; however, he was so thoroughly convinced that his friends, as soon as they knew the state of his affairs, would assist him, that he had no doubt of avoiding, by this means, the bankruptcy to which he must otherwise be subjected. It was proved, in a short time, however, that, although he had acquaintances enough, and without number, there was not among them even a single friend;—they had all recourse, one after another, to the lamest subterfuges and evasions—at last

shunned meeting with him on any occasion; and Selding found himself obliged to submit to many painful sacrifices, in order to escape the utter ruin by which he was threatened. All this filled his already wounded heart with the most bitter contempt and hatred of the world; only his confidence in Benkwitz remained unabated, and, in the changeless friendship of this worthy companion, he trusted that he could find a sort of compensation for the disappointments that he had encountered.

In one of those houses, where Selding now often passed the whole night, where the most nefarious games of chance were played, and the doors kept locked against the police, there appeared occasionally a certain officer, who entered boldly into the amusements of the place, and preserved the most perfect *nonchalance*, whether the stake was high or low. Such conduct of course attracted attention from all present; his appearance and demeanour commanded respect; but to Benkwitz, who had generally the station of banker at the *Vingt-un* and Pharo tables, his presence seemed always particularly troublesome and unwelcome. The more that Benkwitz betrayed irritation at his interference, the more

watchful this stranger became of every proceeding; till, at last, in the middle of a very deep game, he seized the Prussian's hand, holding it with a grasp of iron, till he had forced him to disclose its contents, and prove to the whole party that he was a sharper and a scoundrel! Upon this discovery, there was an universal uproar. Benkwitz foamed with rage, and challenged the officer to mortal combat, while the latter adhered calmly and coldly to his assertions, appealing to the whole party for their confirmation. Selding was at the first moment quite confounded, not knowing what he ought to do; but afterwards concluding that he should support his friend in this extremity, and in hopes that the stranger might be under some mistake, he chose Benkwitz's side in the dispute,—which led to a general warfare. All those who had been losers in the game, joined with the strange officer; the gainers with Benkwitz; and the master of the house tried in vain to restore order among his unruly guests. At last, after a frightful scene of useless altercation, the stranger, who was the only individual, except Selding, who had maintained his own dignity, came close up to the Prussian, took

him by the arm, and whispered some words in his ear; whereupon our hero perceived that his friend grew pale, and even trembled like a leaf. Selding was himself no less agitated, when he saw the end of this rencontre; for Benkwitz in the next minute seemed ready to sink through the earth, he could not bear to meet the looks of any one, but all at once started up, seized his hat and stick, and rushed out through a crowd of people,—his only object now seeming to be that of making his own escape.

All were now silent and astonished, looking for explanation to the stranger, who said that he had, in former years, met with this man in various places,—at Aix la Chapelle,—at Wisbaden, —Embs, and Carlsruhe;—that he had made his *entrée* sometimes as an Englishman—sometimes as a French Count, or an Italian Marquis; but, in all these towns, had been found out and disgraced as a notorious swindler, who lived only by imposing on the credulous and unwary. "For the present," added he, "you may rely that he never more will venture among us,—and what I said to him to-night, is quite sufficient to drive him away from Vienna. I might have done more than

this—I could have effected his utter destruction, for he is completely under my power." The whole party had now crowded round the officer, anxious to hear more; only Selding stood aloof, and quite lost in his own reflections. Perceiving this, the stranger neglected the rest, and went up to him. "I am well aware," said he, "that the fate of this worthless man distresses you exceedingly, and I have for a long while observed with regret that intimacy with which you favour him. It is not the first time that this artful swindler has contrived to gain the confidence of a noble and unsuspecting mind. You may be assured that the respect due to your own undisguised and honourable conduct, ever since I had the pleasure of meeting you, was no slight inducement to take proper measures for unmasking this villain, who would, sooner or later, have effected your utter destruction. I rejoice more than I can express, that I have at last succeeded in my design, and that you will be more on your guard for the future—Farewell!" With these words, he shook hands cordially with Selding, who, in the conflict of his feelings, could not utter a word; the tears started into his eyes, and this was enough to prove to the

stranger, that the person in whose behalf he had interfered, was not ungrateful.

After this adventure, our hero's emotions were indeed much more violent and distracting than at any former period. He found himself at his own house, without knowing how he had come thither; and it was not till after a long interval, that he could arrange his thoughts, which, after all, brought him no comfort or composure of spirit. "Thus, then," he exclaimed, "the last bond which held me united with this world and its pleasures, is broken; I had wished well to all mankind, and have never willingly injured any mortal, yet here I am left as an alien and outcast, utterly alone." In his affection for Amelia, he had been disappointed; his hopes of domestic happiness were for ever gone; dissipation had lost every charm, and where he had at last trusted to find a warm-hearted disinterested friend, he had been the dupe of a selfish contemptible villain, who, under specious pretexts, only sought to rob an unsuspecting and generous victim of his property. The first consequence of this self-examination was, that he knelt down, and took a solemn oath never again to touch a card or dice-box;

after which duty, he felt somewhat like a return of that innate confidence and energy which had so long been unknown to him. This vow was most religiously remembered and adhered to. Immediately, and in the most determined manner, he broke off all intercourse with his late associates; refusing them admittance if they ventured to call at his house, for his heart now loathed the presence of almost every human being. With the same impetuosity with which he had thrown himself about a year ago into the vortex of dissipation, he now recommenced his occupations as a man of business;—he laboured unceasingly—his attention was on the stretch both night and day—and, within a time much shorter than he could have expected, he had contrived to replace almost all that he had lost by negligence, or at the gaming-table. The thought that he was thus labouring for the sake of his child, for whom he was bound to provide, made all his toils seem light, and he never lost sight of this one cherished object.

A state of long-continued and violent excitement, however, (which was so unwonted and unnatural for Selding, who had hitherto no pursuit but that of pleasure,) joined to the effect of weak-

ening excesses, and agitation already undergone, wore out his strength;—he was attacked by a very dangerous illness, so that, being unable to attend his business, he sank into a state of apathy and despondence, from which the good hearted physician Zornau could not help apprehending the worst consequences. He exerted his skill and ingenuity to the utmost, but exhausted nature seemed to mock at all his endeavours; he perceived also, that his friend's domestic circumstances, attended, as he now was, only by mercenary servants, added much to the difficulty. There was, throughout, in Selding's house, a defect of that watchful attention,—that unwearied care, which, indeed, an affectionate heart alone can bestow, and which wealth never can purchase. More than ever did Zornau now deplore that unhappy quarrel with Amelia,—and, at times, the thought of a reconciliation being yet possible, rose in his mind. He knew Selding's goodness of heart,—he was convinced of his wife's unabated love,—but the weak state of his patient did not permit him to venture on any measure which would lead to new mental excitement and agitation. However, he betook himself to Amelia

and explained to her how dangerous the disorder was, under which her husband now suffered. At this intelligence, she expressed the utmost grief and anxiety; she was agitated even more than he had expected,—at last burst into tears, threw herself at Zornau's feet, and besought him to save her beloved Augustus!—She requested also that she might be allowed to go to him immediately; but the physician described the hazard of such an interview,—which it was impossible for him, consistently with his professional duties, to allow; adding, that *hopes* no doubt remained, provided it were possible to obtain better attendance than that of the servants who were now in Selding's house. Amelia's excitement and watchful interest increased every moment; at last she started from the chair on which the physician had again placed her—"*Now* I understand you," cried she in a tone of rapture;—"my plan is formed and fixed, but it cannot be carried through without your assistance. I shall go to my husband, I alone shall be his nurse, nor shall any one else come near him, but he must never learn by whom he is thus attended."

Zornau had, in truth, not anticipated this, and

looked at her with astonishment. "You *must* go to him," she continued, "and say that you have come to recommend a new servant,—an old lady, the widow of an officer who has been reduced to narrow circumstances, and who can be relied on for care and skill in watching the sick. He must, no doubt, agree to any proposal of yours. I shall have recourse immediately to my friend in this neighbourhood, to whom little Gustavus is already accustomed, and under whose care the child will be perfectly safe during my absence. This friend, alone, besides yourself, must be made acquainted with our plan. I shall pretend an attack of sudden illness at her house, which will account for my not returning hither; I can disguise myself so completely, that no one will be able to recognize even a single feature, and, in the course of two hours, will be ready to accompany you, if you will bring a carriage to fetch me away. I shall go directly to my husband, and remain with him as long as there are any dangerous symptoms in his disorder, but it is to be understood, that before he is quite recovered, and before his recollection returns, I shall take my departure, so that he will have no suspicion

who the sick-nurse in reality was, who had so long watched, wept, and suffered beside him."

Zornau had some doubts as to the possibility of carrying this plan into effect; but she contrived to answer them all. During the rest of this day, she was employed in making the requisite arrangements for the care of her child, and it was not till the following morning that Zornau arrived with his carriage, in order to take her to the invalid's house. She had disguised herself in a very old fashioned dress, overloaded with flounces and furbelows; she wore high-heeled shoes, which made her seem much taller than her real stature; her beautiful features were coloured with a brown dye, and her luxuriant hair was concealed under a cap and grey frontlets, so that even the physician, who was aware of the deception, could not possibly have recognized her.

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE Selding had been prepared for the arrival of a new attendant, who was formally ushered into his room by the physician. The window-blinds were drawn down; the gloom at once increased her sadness, and aided the deception. Zornau had gone up softly to his patient's bed, and made a sign that Amelia should draw nearer, but, alas! what a scene here awaited her! After a separation of eighteen months, she beheld once more, by the dim light, her beloved Augustus, but the fixed hopeless expression of long suffering was imprinted on his countenance—he was deadly pale, and so weak, that he could scarcely thank the physician for his inquiries, or bring out a few words to welcome Amelia, whom, of course, he looked upon as a person wholly unknown. Under the dreadful agitation of that moment, she had almost been betrayed,—and it was

not without the utmost exertion of self-command, that she could avoid speaking to him in her own natural voice, instead of the cracked feeble tones of an old woman which she had assumed. It was only the recollection of his weakness, and the terror inspired by the physician's warnings on this head, that prevented her from the indulgence of her own feelings ; but her forcible mind conquered this temptation ; after a short interval, she began her duties with the utmost coolness, care, and circumspection.

From that hour, onwards, no stranger or menial durst ever approach Selding's couch. Day and night she kept her place there, with a patience and power of endurance that seemed almost supernatural ;—she gave him every medicine, every refreshment ; she watched the slightest movement or tone of his voice ; and when she had passed many hours in this state of anxiety, if he chanced to fall asleep, it was her only indulgence, if she could kneel unobserved beside him, pray for him, moisten his burning hand with her tears, and tell him, in a low voice, though he were insensible of her presence, how much she had suffered for his sake during that long, long

separation, and how sincerely she yet loved him. Zornau was often obliged to interfere, beseeching her to have a due regard to her own health ; but there was only one argument, that of rendering herself better able to fulfil her laborious duties, which induced her sometimes to retire for an interval of rest. Meanwhile, Selding's illness always increased, as it drew towards the decisive crisis. He was seldom in possession of his mental faculties, and in his delirium, betrayed amply to Amelia the real state of his wounded heart ; she was convinced that, amid all the dissipation and delusions in which he had been plunged, he had never forgotten her. The fever under which he now suffered, seemed especially to disorder his brain and eye-sight, so that, even in his best intervals during the day, he could not clearly distinguish any object, and this circumstance rendered Amelia's task much less difficult than it would otherwise have been, as she scarcely required to disguise herself, though she persevered in speaking with a tone of voice which it was impossible for him to recognize. At length, her indefatigable endeavours were in so far successful, that there seemed to be a gleam of hope ; his illness

had passed the crisis, and he might possibly recover. His lucid intervals were more frequent, and lasted longer ;—he had also many hours of sound and deep sleep, from which he awoke refreshed and cheerful. Amelia watched, with indescribable rapture, these tokens of returning health ; and would have been quite happy, had she not remembered that the hour of their inevitable separation approached so much the nearer.

Now there commenced a period, of which the influences were more affecting than any that she had in her whole life encountered. As the poor helpless invalid gradually regained his senses, his goodness of heart was again manifested, and all those dark shades in his character, which only passion had produced, were cleared away. Amelia became now the unknown and unsuspected witness of his real feelings, which were obvious in every word and action,—she saw the heroism with which he endured all the sufferings of his malady,—the kindness with which he treated the servants,—and the gratitude he cherished towards her and the physician Zornau. Selding's active mind soon began to require occupation ; but as the weakness in his eyes obliged him to have the room always

darkened, it was not possible to afford him any other entertainment than that of mere conversation. Zornau supplied him regularly with all the public news of the day, and Madam Werner (as Amelia now called herself,) was obliged to tell him all the stories and anecdotes that she could possibly recollect; at last, even the history of her own life! She had long expected that the reviving invalid would make inquiries on that subject, and had prepared herself accordingly. In a low, yet shrill voice, avoiding, as usual, every tone which he could recollect, she spoke of her beloved husband, of whom she had been untimely deprived, and the many afflictions she had endured; then, without being in any degree suspected, she had an opportunity of describing her own feelings.—Oftentimes her story was interrupted by tears, and Selding listened to her with a degree of sympathy and deep interest, for which he himself was at a loss to account. Indeed, notwithstanding all the precaution that had been used, he found himself deeply affected by the tones of Madam Werner's voice—long lost feelings were again awoke—and his thoughts turned more and more frequently to his absent Amelia. The belief that he

had acted unjustly towards her, and that he had misunderstood her character, were ideas that, since the removal of the perfidious Benkwitz, often rose on his mind; but he repressed all such emotions, because he believed their reunion to be impossible, and never mentioned her name—not even to Zornau. Now, however, the long silence was broken, and frequently, in Amelia's presence, he spoke of her to the physician; at those hours, too, when his brain was still disordered, he confused the image of his wife strangely with that of Madam Werner. Often, when she smoothed his pillow, and kindly supported his aching head, he felt a degree of happiness and consolation, such as was to himself inexplicable. Oh, then! how did Amelia's heart beat, and what a struggle it cost her not to betray herself! In such manner a few days passed away, and Selding's health had so much improved, that she saw, with blended joy and regret, the time drawing near when she must again part from her beloved Augustus. An accidental circumstance, arising from her own want of caution, tended to hasten this event. One night, when she was watching him, as usual, quite alone, he had fallen into a slumber so deep, that she doubted

not it would continue for some hours; she, therefore, took this opportunity of throwing aside, for a short time, the troublesome disguise which she always wore. She carefully drew the curtains of his bed, retired to a distant corner of the room, in which stood the toilet-table, and placed her night-lamp, so that, even if he should awake, he could not see her. She then took off the cumbrous old-fashioned gown,—the masquerade cap and false grey hair,—washed the colour from her face, intending to renew it again before she had finished her toilet,—and so stood at the table, half-undressed, re-arranging her own luxuriant locks which hung in beautiful ringlets over her shoulders. At that moment Selding awoke. At first, the lamp light, which, though at a distance, burned brighter than usual, attracted his notice, but then there was a mirror on the wall opposite to his bed, of which Amelia had never thought, and therein he beheld the well-known form in all her loveliness. For some moments he supposed it was but an illusion, which would directly fade, but the form remained; it moved; he saw her twining her long hair round her fingers, and binding it over her forehead. He started up and exclaimed, "Amelia—my own

beloved angel Amelia ! art thou here indeed?" At these words, she was almost petrified with terror, and felt at once the great imprudence of which she had been guilty, but, quickly recovering her self-possession, extinguished the light, threw a shawl round her shoulders, and replaced the false hair and cap. She then stepped cautiously across the room, and took her station, as usual, at his bed, to know what he wished for. He threw back the curtains, and by the moonlight beheld, as usual, the grotesque figure of his old nurse. "What delusion is this?" said he, "Where is she? Where is my dear, long-lost Amelia?" "Your Amelia," answered she, "how can I tell? Where would you have her to be?" "Here in this room! I have seen her;—she was here even now." "You have been dreaming, Herr von Selding." "No," cried he with great vehemence, "*that* was no dream; I was quite awake, and saw her as plainly and surely as I now behold you." "But *where*, or how?" "Yonder in the mirror;—if she were in the room, she must be still here; the door has not been opened." "Nay," answered Amelia, "I must beg you to compose yourself; for all this has been nothing more than

a dream. Yesterday, you conversed with the physician for a long while about your wife, and it was natural enough that you should think of her afterwards." So they disputed for some time, till at last Selding fell back exhausted on his pillow, seemingly unable to speak more; but after a short interval he roused himself and took her hand. "Well," said he, "if it were, as you say, but a dream, it was indeed a beautiful and blissful illusion—would that it had endured longer! Tell me truly, was it but a phantom that I then saw? Art thou my Amelia?" In her extreme agitation, she was now about to tell him all, but she knew that his last words were spoken under the influence of returning delirium, and remembered the physician's injunctions that he should by no means yet be exposed to any mental excitement. She drew her hand gently from his, pressed it on his burning forehead, and said, "Herr von Selding, you are still very weak and feverish; endeavour, I beseech you, to be quiet, and to forget your dream. To-morrow we shall speak of it farther with Dr Zornau." With these words, she left the bed, went to the table, and brought him a cooling draught, which he took from her in silence; but as she

looked at him while he was drinking, she saw that the tears flowed fast from his eyes. Then Amelia could no longer restrain hers;—she wept passionately. Selding heard her sob, and this proof of sympathy deeply affected him. "Good, kind-hearted Werner!" said he; "I give you a great deal of trouble—pray bear with me!" Unable to answer, she pressed his hand in the greatest emotion, and retired immediately, that she might not run the risk of being wholly discovered.

Under the greatest anxiety, she waited for the arrival of Zornau, in order to prepare him beforehand with an account of what had happened during the night. She was resolved that, under some well contrived pretext, she would now remove from the house, for she saw no possibility of remaining, under present circumstances, without bringing on, for certain, that *eclaircissement*, which, in Selding's weak state, might prove so dangerous. The physician came at his usual hour—he was exceedingly vexed at the adventure of the night—and still more distressed at the situation in which he found his patient, who, in his opinion, was now far worse than when he left

him on the preceding day. It was, indeed, in very confused language, and with wild looks, that Selding described the apparition by which he had been visited, and there seemed great risk that he might suffer a dangerous relapse. Yet the physician was under the necessity of acquainting him, that Madame Werner must return that day to her daughter's house, whose accouchement of her first child was about to take place, and who had earnestly besought her mother's attendance at that time of anxiety. Selding seemed greatly startled when he heard this intelligence, but he was at present so absent, and so much wrapt up in his own thoughts, that he felt the blow less than might have been expected. Madam Werner accordingly retired, and promised that, as soon as the circumstances of her own family permitted, she would return to visit the invalid.

Quite contrary to Zornau's anticipations, the supposed vision had the most favourable influence on his patient's mind; for he looked on it as an intimation that she had forgiven, and still loved him. His constitution, naturally good, and aided by the advantages of youth, soon triumphed over this last attack;—he was awoke, indeed, to

new life, by the delightful hopes of restoring that domestic happiness which had seemed lost to him for ever.

Amelia had now, for the second time, forsaken her husband's house ; on this occasion, however, though she was not without fears for his life, yet she left it with feelings very different from those by which she had been before overwhelmed. She had now certain proofs that he loved her, and the rapturous belief that they might again be united, and that, after such severe trials, no second misunderstanding could arise betwixt them, outweighed all her present distresses. Selding, too, felt every day more and more, as if balm from Heaven had been poured into his wounded heart ;—the gloomy night in which his spirit had so long been sunk was dispersed by returning gleams of rational consolation, and by his firm resolutions of amendment in his future life. Since he began thus to recover, he had frequently spoken with Zornau on Amelia's midnight apparition in his apartment, but, as the doctor would not allow this to have been any thing more than a dream, he was at last silent on the subject, but never gave up, in his own mind, the conclusions

he had drawn. He was convinced there had been some mystery, which his attendants were determined not to explain. All that he had observed lately of Madame Werner seemed to him very extraordinary; her demeanour, her person, her tone of voice, the emotion she had betrayed when she saw that he was in tears; these circumstances, added to the reflection in the mirror, excited suspicions which he could not indeed explain to himself, and durst not impart to another for fear of being only laughed at. In short, he had guessed the stratagem with which Amelia's affection had inspired her—was afraid, however, to think himself worthy of such good fortune; but these surmises contributed more to his convalescence, than all the most laboured arts of the physician.

The first day that he was pronounced out of danger, and allowed to rise from bed, he put into Zornau's hands a richly embroidered purse, containing one hundred ducats, and a simple ring, in which his own hair was inclosed, and these he requested the physician would immediately send to Madame Werner. Zornau seemed astonished at the value and elegance of these presents. "Nay, nay," said his patient with a significant smile, "if

Madame Werner, as you informed me, is in reality the poor widow, who, from her narrow circumstances, was thus obliged to enter into the service of a stranger, and bestow such laborious attention as I received from her,—in that case even, she must not look on this sum as payment of my debt, (for what sum could be a due recompense for such exertions?) but merely as a trifling token of my sincere and lasting gratitude. If, however, she is not what you have represented her, I should wish the money to be given to the poor, and that she should retain only the ring in remembrance of me." Zornau pretended not to comprehend the full meaning of this discourse, and Selding would not explain himself any farther. Henceforth the good-hearted physician thought his interference unnecessary, and left it to the natural current of their own affections to bring about that full reconciliation which he so ardently wished.

Still, for a considerable interval, there was somewhat of suspense and mystery that hung over the fates of the so fondly attached wife and husband;—there were even moments in which he yet asked himself, whether it was not possible

that he might have been deceived; and as for Amelia, she also would gladly have been more certain, whether the wish for a reunion was as ardent in his heart, as she felt it to be in her own. Meanwhile, Selding every day importuned his physician for permission to drive out. Zornau for a long time refused, but at length, when his acquiescence was rather extorted than freely given, his patient requested that the good doctor would immediately take the trouble of calling on Amelia, and that, in the gentlest and most delicate manner, he would entreat her to allow that a poor invalid, who had long been a prisoner, might have an interview with her, and so brighten, with the more than sunlight of joy, those first moments of his return to the walks of life. With the utmost alacrity, Zornau undertook this commission, his sole objection being, that the visit might better have been deferred a few days longer. On his arrival at Amelia's house, and delivery of his message, he was answered only with tears of joy and looks of delight, such as no words could have expressed;—but the mere possibility that, by coming abroad too soon, her husband's health might be injured, overcame every scruple that

might otherwise have remained on her mind, and she determined at once on the course that she would pursue. She sent the child immediately to his father's house, with a message that, on the following day, she would come herself, in order that the interview he wished for might take place, without infringing the physician's orders. For the first time, after many weeks, Selding had the happiness of caressing his child; and his anticipations of to-morrow were so vivid, that, through the night, he was quite unable to close his eyes.

The morning came. Amelia resolved to dress herself in her most becoming attire, such as she had worn in her happiest days; smiled indeed at her own vanity, but did not change her intention; then she tied Selding's ring with a silk ribbon round her neck, and, having thus completed her toilet, set out on her way with a beating heart. On her arrival at his house, no one knew her, for the servants that she had left there were all long since dismissed. When it was announced to Selding that a young lady was in the anti-room, who wished to see him, he guessed that it could be no other but Amelia, and hastened out

to meet her. Then they looked on each other; but the conflict of feelings, of joy, fear, doubt, and affection, held them both silent. He took her hand respectfully, almost as if they had been strangers to each other, and pressed it to his lips. She could not utter a word but grasped his hand in both hers, held it long, and looked steadfastly in his eyes, while her own were full of tears. At length, however, Selding, recovering his self-possession, thanked her for the condescending kindness of her visit, and led her into his own apartment. With surprise and delight she observed the change that had taken place here; the room was no longer fitted up as a study for himself alone, as it had been during her absence, and when she attended him in illness, but now appeared just as it had been when they lived together, two years ago. His bed now stood where hers used to be; her writing-table was set out with pens, ink, and paper, which he had used through that morning; every thing now appeared as in former prosperous days, and the sight of so many well-known objects, affected her beyond measure. "I have chosen this room for the present," said her husband, "because I find myself

here surrounded by so many delightful associations,—by such visions from the happy hours that are now long since past; and I can dream in my solitude, till as it seems all is restored to me; but, alas, the delusion is but for a moment!"

Amelia looked round her with a mournful expression, then fixed her eyes on the ground. "All that I see in this room," said she, "is so well-known, I cannot help feeling as in old times, as if I were indeed at home! Do you know," added she, "that I had come hither with the intention of spending this whole day with you?" She smiled on him with indescribable kindness, while his eyes gleamed in his exultation and delight. "Is it possible Amelia!" said he, "and when I had not even dared to beg your forgiveness? With your presence, this would indeed be a bright day for me!" "Nay, I am quite in earnest," she replied; "and I left orders with my servants, that our little Gustavus should be brought also." "*Our* Gustavus?" interposed Selding in an anxious tone, "there is yet that one link unbroken betwixt us;—he is *our* child!" Amelia became quite alarmed; she had deter-

mined to avoid, as long as possible, any expressions that might agitate and affect him. "Come now," said she at last, "we must give over this, you are tired and must take your place again here on the sofa by the writing-table." She would have led him thither, but ere she was aware, he had clasped her in his arms; and of a scene like this it is better not to attempt description. After their first raptures of forgiveness and mutual reconciliation were past, Selding spoke to her as follows:—"Amelia, I have one question to ask, which to me seems of great consequence, and I beseech you to answer sincerely. You will pity me if I have been under a mistake, but do not, I conjure you, mock at my credulity." Amelia's heart beat violently, and he proceeded. "I should have spoken to you before now, of a certain Madame Werner, who came hither when my severe illness was at the worst, and when my servants would have allowed me to die for want of proper assistance. This lady (at the risk, I may truly say, of her own life,) attended me with the utmost care and fidelity. Somewhat of a mysterious and inexplicable resemblance in her figure and demeanour,—sometimes

too, a momentary tone of voice awoke in my mind suspicions, hopes, and apprehensions, which I dared not mention to any one, and yet, Oh Amelia! was all which then occurred but a mere delusion of my own disordered brain?" He started up, and walked hastily to and fro, then took his place again beside her, and resumed his discourse more tranquilly. "Forgive me that I am thus moved; I shall endeavour to tell my story with rational composure. One night, when I had fallen into a profound sleep, I was suddenly awoke by a light in my room, which seemed to come from the mirror that hangs opposite to my bed, and therein I beheld your figure Amelia, —so precisely like,—the resemblance was so accurate, that I called your name aloud,—I wished to start up and embrace you! But all at once the light faded away,—the form had vanished,—I found myself alone in my dark room. Madame Werner came to me; but she, too, was so confused, so trembling, and agitated, ——" "That you found out your own loving wife," cried Amelia, and threw herself weeping on Selding's breast.—"Yes, my dear Augustus,—it was I myself, who would not, for all the world,

have left you, nor entrusted any stranger with the care which you required in your illness. Your own heart then discovered my stratagem; but that night cost me many tears of regret and self-reproach. Here, my beloved, is the ring which you afterwards sent to me." She paused, and drew the ring from her bosom, but he did not make any answer; she looked at him, and was terrified, for he lay with his eyes closed as if fainting. Joy, indeed, is overpowering, as well as sorrow; but her tears and caresses soon revived him, and the bond of affection was once more united betwixt them, never again to be broken. Still they remained insensible to all that passed around them. Zornau knocked at the door, but was unheard; he came in without farther ceremony, and stood for some time contemplating the scene. At length Selding observed him. "Welcome, good Zornau," cried he; "you are come opportunely to witness the happiest moments of that existence which you contributed your best efforts to preserve. I possess again my dearly beloved Amelia! I was not so blind nor confused in illness as you thought. I guessed the truth, and your persuasions to the

contrary were of no avail. *She* it was, my faithful noble-minded wife, who, in spite of all my errors, and all the injuries I had inflicted, then watched over and supported me in the hours of pain and despondency.

THE SIEGE OF ANTWERP.

THE SIEGE OF ANTWERP.

CHAPTER I.

It happened at Antwerp, in the year 15—, one louring stormy evening, that Cassilda Nunez was seated in her own solitary chamber. Lost in melancholy reflections, she gazed from the window on the broad troubled waters of the Scheldt,—when the door was opened cautiously; a man, dressed like an ordinary peasant, stepped in, looked round him, as if fearful of being observed, presented to her a sealed letter, and, having thus fulfilled his commission, glided away without speaking a word. Cassilda trembled as she read the superscription. She had just broken the seal, when, with a dark frown over his features, her

husband, Frederico Gianibelli, made his appearance. She came forward to meet him, and gave him the billet in silence. "From your father, perhaps?" said he in a low growling tone—then read aloud what here follows:—

"Wretched girl,—thou art a runaway, not only from thy father, but from thine own happiness. His malediction followed thee across the seas, when at the heretic queen's gates, thou wert forced to seek for protection. His malediction follows thee here, while thy sinful heart still clings to the traitor, who, faithless to his religion and his country, supports the cause of heretic rebels. Leave him then, ere it is yet too late. On the Fort of Santa Maria waves thy father's banner, entrusted to him by that generous prince, whose heart still beats affectionately towards the fugitive, who so little deserves his love. Forgiveness yet awaits thee, if thou wilt return to us.

"Fernando Nunez."

Frederico folded up the letter, frowning as before,—then, with a steadfast look at Cassilda, inquired—"Whence have you received this treacherous communication?" She described calmly the mysterious manner in which it had been

brought to her, and he left the room without interchanging another word.

Cassilda Nunez was the daughter of a Spaniard, without patrimony, who had, from early youth, been a soldier, acquiring little by his profession; at length he had come with her to Madrid, in order to obtain a situation under Alexander Duke of Parma, who had been appointed to command the Spanish army in the Netherlands. Accidentally the Duke, who was then at the capital, saw the beautiful Cassilda Nunez in the Prado. By no means indifferent to female charms, but still more susceptible of impressions from that powerful and lively intellect which he could read in every glance of her dark eloquent eyes, the young hero admired her more than any girl he had yet beheld, and, before he was aware, had fallen deeply in love. The heart of a Farnese never, indeed, takes up any impression lightly; or, if his attachment at the beginning was of an ordinary and commonplace description, such feelings were changed into the most respectful and serious passion, when he was forced to acknowledge the dignity with which the poor girl repulsed his addresses, and became aware that the *Prince*, with all his wealth

and splendour, could never obtain from her that return of affection which might have been won by the *untitled* hero. But his love seemed to grow more ardent in proportion to the difficulties thrown in his way. Her father, meanwhile, who expected that, on this state of affairs, he might build up his own fortune, of course connived at, and even sanctioned the Prince's addresses, who used to come every day to the soldier's humble quarters, always preserving, however, the most respectful and modest demeanour in his attention to Cassilda. These visits were made with great caution, but though they were concealed from almost all his friends, the spies of King Philip were on the watch, and did not fail to represent at court how much of the Duke's time was wasted in the house of Fernando Nunez. The cold-hearted monarch subjected him to a serious lecture on his imprudence, which, however, had no other effect than that of rendering the young Prince more careful, and his visits less frequent than formerly.

Among the Duke's private acquaintances and friends was numbered a young Italian, named Frederico Gianibelli,—a man of extraordinary ta-

lents, who, notwithstanding his youth, had distinguished himself highly by his services as an officer in Flanders, and had, therefore, won the utmost confidence and favour from the commander-in-chief. All that was grand and gigantic in effect,—plans that to meaner souls would have been overpowering,—had for him especial charms. As to dangers, instead of being deterred by them, they seemed, in his estimation, to render the duties intrusted to him more desirable and attractive. Similarity of character, and many times an exact coincidence in their military schemes, had brought him by degrees more and more into the Duke's society, and at length, he had been appointed to go with his Highness as aid-de-camp to the intended blockade of Antwerp.

From this confidential friend the Duke could not long hide his attachment to the beautiful Cassilda. Frederico, too, had beheld her—he had admired beyond measure the fixed resolution and dignity with which she repulsed the advances of a lover, whose rank was so unsuitable to her own; but ere long, he had the unexpected pleasure of discovering, that Cassilda had looked on himself with approving glances, and that she would wil-

lingly receive from him those honourable addresses which it was impossible for the high-born Prince to offer. One evening, before this discovery had been fully made, Frederico happened to pay a visit at her father's house, who was absent; but he had found Cassilda at home in her own apartment, where they were engaged in friendly discourse, when Prince Alexander, without having knocked at the door, suddenly made his appearance. Frederico rose and advanced to meet him with rather an embarrassed countenance; while Cassilda, who had not expected this visit, hastily quitted her chair, and, not reflecting on the conclusions that might be drawn from her conduct, glided away into another room. The Duke's eyes glared with indignation. "The flower, however humble," said he, "that Alexander of Parma thinks proper to cherish, stands rather too high for a hand like thine to pluck. Thou mayest retire."

Frederico went without making any answer; but these words had excited him to a degree of rage, which only the most ample vengeance could allay. From that moment onwards, he was sensible how deep was the attachment that subsisted

betwixt himself and Cassilda, for wounded pride had awoke all the slumbering emotions of his heart. As to the Duke's proud warnings and menaces, he looked on them with contempt, and adopted the bold resolution of entering the lists openly as the Prince's rival. His love, now blended with ambition, became more than ever ardent, so that he could brave all dangers. In the bloom of youth and manly beauty, endowed too with almost unequalled talents, and a glowing romantic imagination, he offered his hand in marriage to Cassilda;—he offered her the truest, most energetic devotion of a heart that, till now, had never really loved.

Frederico was indeed the only man in whose presence Cassilda could not remain perfectly unconcerned and indifferent; and, of course, it was impossible that this state of affairs could long escape the watchful eyes of her father, who perceived that he now ran the utmost risk of seeing all his favourite hopes and deep-laid schemes defeated. The Duke also discovered the truth, notwithstanding the trouble which the lovers had taken to conceal it. Frederico was but too well acquainted with the unyielding obstinacy of the

Prince's temper; he knew that, by trusting to time and chance, all would, of necessity, be lost, and that it was only by an immediate flight that he could secure the fulfilment of his own purposes. Tormented by her father's base and mercenary plots;—intimidated also by the Duke's violence, and the powerful influence attached to his station, which might be exerted in many ways for her ruin, Cassilda, after a feeble resistance, submitted to Frederico's proposals. She fled with him towards the sea coast; they arrived safely at St Ander, where they found a ship that brought them over with a favourable wind to England.

The regard which Frederico had once felt towards the Duke of Parma; the admiration which he had cherished for his character and talents, were now changed into the most deadly hatred; and, as formerly, he had been spurred on by his ambition to join with the Duke, for the intended attack and plunder of Antwerp, *now* his feelings of revenge determined him to follow a very different course; he resolved still to go into Flanders, and to devote his utmost energies in defence of those protestant districts which the Spaniards had destined to be plundered and enslaved.

By Queen Elizabeth he was welcomed as an accomplished, able soldier. She supplied him with money, and gave him a letter of recommendation to the Prince of Orange, who received Frederico, not as a stranger, but as a young officer with whose character and brave conduct, in the Spanish service, he was already well acquainted. Here our hero was introduced also to the brave Marinix von St Aldegonde, burgomeister of Antwerp, in whose society, and accompanied still by his wife, who loved him almost to adoration, he hastened to embark for the Netherlands, determined either to conquer the proud Alexander in war, as he had before done in love, or, if this object were not gained, to die in the ruins of the city which he had sworn to defend.

With a heart full of ardent courage and delightful anticipations, he entered the town, along with his new friend the burgomeister. Looking forward to the powerful assistance which the Prince of Orange had promised him; trusting also to the Zealand fleet, with which the river Scheldt seemed to offer him a secure channel of communication; but, above all, relying on the resources of his own undaunted and creative genius,

he did not, for a moment, allow himself to doubt, that his endeavours would ultimately be triumphant. Yet, on the very same day, when Liefenhoek, a fort of considerable importance on the island of Doel, was captured by the Spaniards, and the free navigation of the Scheldt was lost, the brave noble-hearted Prince William of Orange fell by the treacherous attacks of assassins, and with him seemed to perish, at the same moment, all the fairest hopes of those who fought in the cause of liberty. Frederico Gianibelli now felt also, that adversity had begun her attacks on him, and had already clouded the brilliant prospects that were so fondly drawn; but, above all, he was discontented with the conduct of the Antwerp citizens, who, like true merchants, judged of every scheme on their own narrow-minded principles of caution and economy;—they were, therefore, never prepared to meet the sacrifices which he demanded of them, and treated his lofty plans for their defence as mere chimeras.

Meanwhile, Prince Alexander, who had been duly informed of Gianibelli's proceedings, and that Cassilda had accompanied him to Antwerp, felt a new stimulus towards the fulfilment of that

grand exploit, which he had long before at heart. Accordingly, he exerted his utmost ingenuity in devising measures for the overthrow of this important bulwark of Flanders and of Brabant. In his mode of procedure, finding himself opposed by his best and oldest generals, he raised himself, with resistless energy, above all hindrance and prudent counsel;—he saw, as well as they did, the dangers that were before him—but, at once excited by love, ambition, and revenge, he prepared himself, with gigantic energy, for the decisive encounter. Having observed, that, notwithstanding the capture of Liefenhoek, the fort of Lillo on the Brabant coast, which was held by the brave General Teligny, would still render it impossible for him to have that effectual command, which he had expected, over the Scheldt, he determined, at all risks, to throw a bridge across the river. Betwixt Kallas and Ordon, where the stream forms a curve, he erected two forts, named Santa Maria and Santo Philippo, one on each shore, in order to protect his engineers in constructing the bridge. The largest ships were deprived of their masts, which he shod with iron, and fixed in the ground as piles, notwith-

standing the depth of the water. The bridge was made of the dismantled ships and their boats, the whole being held together so firmly by cables, that it resisted all the violence of the waves and masses of floating ice which were now in the river; but, in order to supply himself with more vessels, he opened dams and sluices, so that the country was flooded, and brought over those which were thrown into his power by the fall and plunder of Ghent.

While these hostile operations were carried on within sight of Antwerp, Frederico, for his part, rested neither night nor day. The ramparts were strengthened and extended, so that danger and alarm might, as long as possible, be warded off from the quiet dwellings of the citizens; but it was not by means of such ordinary methods as every brave soldier would have employed, that Antwerp could now possibly be saved. The passage of the Scheldt must again be opened; the bridge must be destroyed; and although our hero's contrivances for this purpose could not fairly be judged of except by a mind resembling his own, and, therefore, were ill adapted to the comprehension of Antwerpian merchants; yet,

St Aldegonde's acute intellect, and his influence in the town, proved then of such importance, that means, to a certain extent at least, were supplied for the fulfilment of Frederico's plans. He had, at his own disposal, two ships, each of one hundred tons burden, and a number of flat-bottomed boats, which he directly began to convert for his own purposes into engines of destruction.

Just at this eventful epoch, when news arrived that the formidable bridge had been completed, and public apprehensions were stretched to the utmost, Cassilda received that letter from her father, who was now employed as commander at the fort of *Santa Maria*. Frederico Gianibelli, since his abode in Antwerp, was, alas! no longer distinguished by that bold, jocund and buoyant spirit, which he had evinced when in Spain and in England. The failure of many plans that he had formed, and which had been crushed at the outset by the paltry cautions and timidity of the vulgar spirits by whom he was surrounded, had rendered him gloomy,—even capricious in temper,—and his affection for Cassilda had lost that enthusiastic and heart-felt ardour, by which she

had at first been won. Ambition, blended with the spirit of revenge, may give new energy to a lover's addresses, but proves, alas! the worst enemy of domestic happiness and peace. The myrtle wreath which she had bestowed on him, when in her heart he became a successful rival of the Duke, withered now, and was only succeeded in his imagination by the laurel crown of victory, which he thought to gain in the battle field. His military stratagems, by which he was unceasingly occupied,—his restless activity and passionate devotion to one object,—were such, that he returned oftentimes his beloved Cassilda's endearments with coldness, almost with disdain. Ambition, alone, was the fuel by which his fiery spirit was now attracted, and Cassilda was acutely sensible of this alteration. She was too proud to reproach her husband; neglected love had changed in her heart to silent uncomplaining grief; and it was only to one confidante, Catharina van der Weert, the betrothed bride of Teligny, that she could not help involuntarily betraying the real cause of her sadness.

On the arrival of that letter from Cassilda's father, brought by a disguised messenger, who was

sought for every where in vain, doubts arose for the first time in Frederico's mind of his wife's affection, even of her fidelity. For the first time, too, his wayward and now morbid imagination led him into a comparison of himself, the dependent and humble soldier, having no other fortune but his own talents and courage, with the powerful high-born hero, who succeeded in every undertaking, because he possessed all outward advantages. The latter needed only to conceive a stratagem, in order to find means for its being carried into effect; the former was under the necessity of begging his way, and of submitting to the jurisdiction of mercenary citizens, who ruled over him, because, forsooth, they were styled burgomeisters and senators. Now, he saw too clearly the wide distance at which fate had placed him beneath the station of his princely opponent. Nay, more, Cassilda's grief and silent abstraction appeared only proofs of that longing which had probably taken possession of her heart, to be once more among the fortunate Spaniards. Perhaps her imperial lover, since his recent successes, appeared to her in a light far more interesting and attractive than before; especially now, when

even the strong walls of Antwerp seemed to afford no defence against him,—when he forced the broad stormy waters of the Scheldt to obey his control—and yielded only to Cassilda's charms, offering himself as a willing captive in her chains.

"*He* then, or *I*!" So Frederico exclaimed in a terrific tone, as he returned home after some hours spent in vain inquiries after the stranger who brought the letter,—and with these words unconsciously grasping the hilt of a dagger, which he now always wore. He found his wife sitting mournful and downcast, at a window which looked across to the shores of Brabant, and the fort of Santa Maria. Catharina van der Weert was with her. He went up gloomily to Cassilda, fixed on her a penetrating though not unkind gaze, and said, after a long inward conflict, "Wouldst thou go from hence to thy father? Is this, perhaps, the secret wish that now weighs on thy heart? Speak, then, at once the truth! Frederico Gianibelli has courage for all that can befall him—he can bear even that from which the spirits of other men would shrink, and bid defiance to fate, however horrible its threatenings! Only *this* he cannot

endure, to be the victim of cowardly chicane and artifice! By the Holy Virgin, who lends her name to yonder fortress, I swear, if it be thy wish to take refuge in the camp of the enemy, I shall allow thee to go hence in safety, and without one reproachful word!" Cassilda had risen from her place at the window—"Frederico," said she, with dignity, "I, too, had learned to bear that from which the spirits of other women would shrink. I left my father and my native land for love,—for the sake of an attachment which I could not so easily renounce and sacrifice as thou hast done,—nor shall I renounce it but with life!" "Well, then, my noble-hearted wife," exclaimed Frederico, embracing her with ardour, "be this our watchword,—'Love even unto death—Fidelity for ever!'" Cassilda gave him her hand in silence; with her eyes uplifted to Heaven, she vowed more intelligibly than words could have expressed,—"Love even unto death—Fidelity for ever!" "So, *now*," answered Frederico, "I shall return to my task, and fulfil it joyfully. I know that the proud invader, whatever may be his fortune in war, will never obtain *thee*, even though he rode triumphantly

over Gianibelli's mangled corse, into the ruins of Antwerp." With these words, he imprinted one fervent kiss on Cassilda's lips, and vanished.

The two friends (for Catharina had been present through the whole scene) looked silently at each other, then embraced, both weeping passionately. "Poor unhappy Cassilda!" said her confidante, "here thou art fettered by the resistless bands of love, and yet in yonder fortress filial duty claims also thy presence."—"If love indeed," said Cassilda, "if *requited* love here detains me in silken chains, then, my good Catharina, I shall never complain nor murmur. On Frederico alone I have relied; to him alone my whole affections are given. When I left my father's house I vowed that I should conquer with him or die, and never shall repent my engagement; but to you, indeed, my fortunate friend, how different is the lot assigned—a marriage to be celebrated with your father's blessing!—Your Teligny, amiable and mild-tempered as he seems, who, in your presence, only thinks of love, while he is at other times so fierce and resolute against the enemy, must insure your domestic happiness; but Frederico's passions, unequal and

outrageous as the lava streams of a volcano, force me into their own vortex, and bear my spirit irresistibly into his own sphere of conflict. But, Catharina," added she in a tone of ardour and enthusiasm, " this even—the wild energy which flashes in every glance of his dark eyes, and vibrates in every nerve—this exalted courage which raises him above difficulties that others would deem insurmountable ;—his obstinate perseverance, that admits of no middle course between the highest good fortune or annihilation—these are the endowments which attracted my affections to Frederico—by these I am still, and shall ever be fettered. Willingly would I encounter my death-blow for his sake, or given by his hand."—" Nay, nay, Cassilda," said Catharina, " with a lover such as you have now described, I indeed could never be happy. My affections, however warm and constant, must always be placid and calm ; nor could I ever, for the sake of any lover, renounce the duty that I owe to a parent who protected me during the helpless years of infancy, and without whose care I should never have lived to enjoy the fortunes that may be in store for me. It is true that I love Teligny most sincere-

ly, and for his sake would willingly forfeit my own life—but my father—or even the respect and obedience that I owe to such a parent—never! This I should feel to be impossible!"

At that moment, Teligny himself rushed into their apartment. He ran up to Catharina, and clasped her in his arms with great emotion,—"Poor unhappy girl," cried he, "what will become of you?" Frederico had followed him, and now said, in his usual stern and grave voice, "Mademoiselle, your presence will at this time be more requisite in your own house than in mine. Teligny will conduct you safely thither." Catharina, accordingly, went with her lover, trembling in every limb, and Cassilda ventured to ask her husband, what had caused this unusual agitation? The truth (of which Frederico now briefly informed her,) was, that the messenger who brought the Spanish letter had been at last discovered, and taken prisoner. On his person were found many letters of the Duke of Parma, proving amply that the Prince carried on a secret intercourse with several eminent citizens of Antwerp. Selfish wretches, who preferred their own private interest to the weal

of their native country, were indeed numerous, and among them fell to be included men in whom much confidence had been reposed; for example, Catharina's father, Adrian van der Weert, a privy-counsellor. His hatred of St Aldegonde, and firm adherence to the religious creed of his ancestors, had rendered him a traitor to the state. The Duke's letter addressed to this dignitary, only roused suspicion, but when his house was searched, other documents found there afforded certain conclusions as to his guilt. Consequently he was arrested; nor could the entreaties of the brave Teligny and Frederico, nor St Aldegonde's advice, that he should only be doomed to perpetual imprisonment, satisfy the furious resentment of the people. In a few days his head fell by the hand of the executioner.

The same secret messenger had also confessed on his trial, that he had brought a letter to the wife of Gianibelli; but the latter explained that incident to the senators,—produced the letter, which, as they perceived, was from a father to his daughter, without any political tendency whatever. He appealed also to St Aldegonde, who proved, that the only use made by Frederico of

the letter, was to acquaint his friend immediately that a spy was in the town; upon which they had joined in making a search, which at last proved successful. However, the mere necessity that he had been brought under, of urging this representation in his own defence, made a deep and painful impression on our hero. That he, whose ardent mind so eagerly seized on every possible means of injuring and opposing the Duke of Parma, should be suspected of an intention to join with him, or of having willingly received secret dispatches, was an idea almost insupportable, and the longer that he reflected on the confidence that subsisted betwixt Cassilda and Catharina van der Weert, the deeper did the most tormenting doubts take root in his mind. Even Teligny, whom he had always before treated as a trust-worthy and valued friend, was now received by him with marked coldness and indifference.

But, alas! Teligny had himself become changed in character, for the house of Catharina's father, in which he had so often been happy, was now become the abode of grief and despair. The ghost of its late miserable owner seemed to glide threatening through its desolate halls. "And

can you still wield your sword," said Catharina, "in the cause of those remorseless murderers who brought my father to the scaffold?" Her filial sorrow had indeed overpowered all other emotions; she remained shut up in her chamber, and would not look upon the sunlight. At last she would only write to Teligny. "When my father's ghost," said she, "that now summons his friends to avenge him, has been appeased and satisfied, then, perchance, but not till then, we shall meet again. But within these gloomy walls of Antwerp, you shall never behold me more." Teligny ran from place to place in the frenzy of despair,—and to him, therefore, a new proposal, at that time made by the senate, was exceedingly opportune and welcome. They suggested that a man of talents and consequence should endeavour to make his way across to Zealand, and hasten the preparations for sending out the auxiliary fleet, which had been too long delayed. He offered his services for carrying this plan into execution; was approved of by the magistracy, and set out from Antwerp, without having been allowed even to take leave of Catharina. She adhered firmly to her determination, that here in

Antwerp they should never meet again. Thus, the bravest officer, (Gianibelli excepted,) he who had been long the principal support of the Antwerp commonweal, and who had been ever foremost in the ranks of danger, took his departure. St Aldegonde, with a sad heart, gave him the requisite convoy, but, when he bade his friend farewell, it was impossible for him to repress his apprehensions of evil fortune. These were but too well-founded. Teligny was betrayed,—fell into the hands of the Spaniards,—and his native country had to deplore the absence (perhaps for ever) of her noblest champion.

Brussels also was now taken by the Spaniards, and thus all intercourse over land, by which subsidiary forces could have been hoped for, was cut off; the bridge across the Scheldt was completely finished, and public danger had come to its utmost height. However, this very danger, which had been rolling nearer and nearer like a dark thunder-cloud, seemed at length to rouse in the besieged, and people of the united provinces, courage, such as they had never shown before. Count Justia von Nassau, too, advanced with the Zealand fleet; he bombarded Liefenhoek,

took possession of the fort and Island, and there remained no obstacle to prevent his advancing up the Scheldt towards the bridge.

In Antwerp, meanwhile, Gianibelli became, if possible, more restless and active than ever. Since he had discovered, by the letter of Fernando Nunez, that the Duke still cherished hopes of getting Cassilda into his power, and tearing her from her husband's arms, this afforded a new spur to his exertions, and, without a moment's intermission, he racked his invention for new modes of defence. The two ships which had been voted to him by the senate, were by no means so large as he could have wished ;—however, he had named one of them *Hope*, the other *Fortune*, and transformed them into diabolical engines,—floating mines,—which he trusted would bring destruction on his enemies. Having cut away the inside partitions, he filled the entire hold with gunpowder, hand-grenades, chain and grape-shot, —with all other murderous missiles that could be devised ; finally covered the deck with gravestones, with which he chose to supply himself from a church-yard. At last, the day had arrived, on the evening of which his grand exploit

was to be performed. The utmost caution had been used to keep the preparation of these ships a profound secret, and with proud confidence of success, Gianbelli now welcomed the hour of twilight. "Yonder," cried he to Cassilda, drawing her to a window, and placing a telescope in her hand. "Yonder, where you see a very dark spot, is the bastion of Santa Maria. Look under it on the right, and you can discern a black stripe across the water—that is the bridge. There, before morning, the watchword shall be 'liberty or death.' The Santa Maria will this night make her ascension, and——.'" "Hush—hush," said Cassilda, shuddering at these irreverent words, which Frederico pronounced unconsciously in the fervour of his own anticipations;—but, at that moment, the door opened; and, dressed in very deep mourning, with a long black veil, Catharina made her appearance. It was the first time since her father's death, and the unfortunate embassy of Teligny, that she had visited her friend, who received her with every token of kindness and affection. Gianibelli, however, to whom she made a deep obeisance, looked on her with cold dignity. "Since we met last," said

she, " it has been the will of Heaven, that the darkest clouds of misfortune should gather around me. The lightning, too, has struck ; I am bereft of all that I held dear in this world, and stand forsaken amid the ruins of my once prosperous fortune. For the first time to-day, after long solitude, I have ventured forth, only that I may throw myself before the altar of the high church, and implore from our omnipotent father, patience and courage to support those inevitable trials. Will you, my only friend, spare a little time to go with me ? without your support, I feel that I am unable to fulfil even this duty." Gianibelli's dark brows contracted ; the proud hopes that before beamed in his eyes, were changed to wrath and resentment. " You are offended, Signor," said Catharina, turning to him—but in this you do me injustice,—I shall remember you in my prayers,—I shall implore a blessing on your head, for, when my father was deserted by all the rest of the world, you and St Aldegonde had compassion for his distresses. Be not angry with the poor forsaken orphan. Come, my dear Cassilda, God may yet hear our humble supplications."

" Go, then, in God's name ;" said Gianibelli, moved by her last words,—" pray that my designs may not be defeated, for on them depends the fate of your country, and of all its faithful adherents." Cassilda and her friend accordingly walked out together to the only church where Catholic worship was still permitted ; they were kneeling at the altar of the Blest Virgin, when a stranger, who had seemed before to watch them on the streets, glided up to Cassilda, slipped a letter into the wide sleeve of her Spanish dress, and immediately vanished. Her devotion was disturbed ; her thoughts were distracted ; for she apprehended immediately that the letter came from her father. When vespers were ended, she accompanied Catharina as fast as possible to the house of the latter ; here she broke the seal, and read what follows :

" Once more, Cassilda, I wish to prove that I can feel for you as a father ; once more I must try whether I cannot persuade you to remember your duty, and return to the bosom of the true and only church—for, surrounded as you now are by heretics, there is no doubt that you will ere long become their prey. Oh ! come to us again !—

you shall be received with kindness; the past shall be forgotten; riches, happiness, and honour, await you. At this moment you could appear as a ruler—as an empress,—in *his* presence, before whom you will ere long tremble in captivity, for, after a few days or weeks, Antwerp will be laid in ruins. Choose, then, your lot. Will you remain with a father's malediction, in the arms of a despairing traitor, or come hither to receive his blessing, under the protection of a conquering and noble-minded hero? Place your answer behind the statue of the Apostle Peter, at the entrance of the High Church. FERNANDO NUNEZ."

"Love even unto death—Fidelity for ever!" exclaimed Cassilda, and with these words she tore the paper, and threw it from her with vehemence. "Nay," said Catharina, "this Love which you encourage, and which is followed by a father's curse, will one day change into a demon, and aim a dagger at my friend's heart. Only Heaven forbid, that Fernando Nunez should fall a victim at the gates of Antwerp, while his daughter here triumphs within the walls! Truly, a father's blessing has no power to raise me above the horrors of my own fate—but his malediction must

have brought everlasting misery on my head!" "Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Cassilda, inexpressibly struck by these last words. She seemed as if suddenly awoke from a dream, snatched up a pen, and on a fragment of paper, that lay on Catharina's table, traced these lines:

"Beware this night of the bridge, and of the fort named Santa Maria. Keep at a distance from both, if your life is as dear to you as it must be to your daughter, CASSILDA."

"May Heaven bless you, if you have written like an affectionate daughter!" said Catharina, as her friend hastened away. The latter went back trembling and anxiously to the church, where, according to the directions given, she concealed her answer behind the statue of St Peter. While she was yet a few steps advanced on her retreat, she observed the same man by whom she had been followed into the church; she saw him take the letter, and then hasten away as if his life depended on his expedition. "Thus I have made one sacrifice at the shrine of filial affection," said she to herself on the road home,—"God grant that I may not have sinned against other duties that are yet dearer to my heart!"

CHAPTER II.

Evening now closed in. All Antwerp was in commotion; suspense and anxiety were painted on every countenance; only Cassilda stood as usual, thoughtful and gloomy, at her window, looking out upon the desolate darkness of the night. Suddenly she saw a gleam of light that danced along the surface of the river; then other fires were kindled, and moved onward in regular order. The lights resembled pillars of fire, reflected on the water, and the radiance was mirrored a thousand-fold in the weltering waves. This effulgence became always brighter and fiercer, till the whole appeared like a sea of flames; and Cassilda scarcely doubted that the fort had already been blown up. Her imagination presented to her her father's mangled frame, with his grey hairs and angry visage, among the ruins. But just then, her husband came into the room,

—clasped his uplifted hands, and exclaimed in a frightful mood of devotion, "Almighty Ruler!—bless and prosper my undertaking of this night!—give to those flames the force of giant's arms, that they may destroy all that falls within their range. Let them hurl the grave-stones of our murdered citizens on the heads of the tyrannical invader and his troops. Grant new strength to the troubled waters, that they may rise and overwhelm our oppressors. Let not Frederico's doom be sealed at such an hour;—let not his star of hope and prosperity now sink into darkness!"

Meanwhile, the approach of this extraordinary flotilla had roused all the Spanish army, and every man hastened to his appointed station. The Duke of Parma seemed, by his supernatural exertions and self-possession, to be present every where at one and the same moment. Surrounded by his officers, he dealt out directions for the protection of those points where danger from fire was most to be apprehended. "Gianibelli, no doubt," said he, "has been at work here, and has prepared us some diversion to beguile this long winter night." Accordingly, he laughed aloud as he saw the first flat-bottomed boats (which ap-

peared, for deception's sake, as ordinary fire-vessels) carried by the force of the stream, aided by a strong breeze, amid the outworks of the bridge, where they were entangled, and their lights rapidly extinguished. Then another division floated on—but these, as Gianibelli expected, were soon dispersed and darkened as the former had been; —at length, the Hope drew near slowly and majestically. This ponderous vessel was like the rest, borne along with the current, and forced against the bridge—but not being, like them, repelled by the outworks, which were insufficient to withstand such an attack, she was driven close up to the railing of shipmasts, and halted in her course, just under the spot where the Duke of Parma stood with several of his officers. They supposed, however, that this intruder might as easily be disposed of as her precursors;—the soldiers rushed forward with iron-headed poles to force back the heavy vessel from the bridge; —the Duke himself assisted in this task, and, by his example, excited them to new courage. At that moment, Fernando Nunez made his appearance;—with a pale anxious visage, he besought the Prince, for Heaven's sake, to

leave the dangerous station which he now occupied,—but the latter, unwilling to be disturbed, acted as if he had not heard these remonstrances. Fernando at last seized him by the arm,—shou'ed in his ear the name of "Cassilda," and drew him away almost by violence. They returned to the Fort of Santa Maria, and, just as they were entering the gates, there took place a tremendous explosion, as if the very earth had been rent asunder! The Duke and his attendants were, by the concussion of the atmosphere, struck to the ground, but had received no serious injury. He was the first to recover his senses, and rouse himself from stupor, to witness the havock and utter confusion of his army, with the destruction of that bridge, which had cost him such labour and anxiety, and to hear the moans and shrieks of the wounded and dying sufferers. Even the river had been agitated to its inmost depths, so that all the works seemed to be under water, and that part of the bridge at which the *Hope* had exploded, was completely ruined. "Gianibelli!" cried the Duke, gnashing his teeth with rage, "thou hast here wounded me for the second time; but, though wounded, thou shalt find that

I am not yet vanquished." With that unshaken composure and dignity, which are only to be found in minds of the most heroic mould, he employed himself directly on the necessary measures for extinguishing the fire that spread in various directions,—and prepared for the reception of the Zealand fleet, for he had no doubt that the Admiral would immediately make his appearance,—and take advantage, if possible, of the breach which had been gained.

At last, the morning broke, and the wintry sun showed to their full extent the devastations of the night. Above all, it was horrible to look on the multitude of dead bodies, and on the wounded, to whom it had yet been impracticable to render any assistance. Had there been an earthquake, the tokens of disaster could scarcely have been more formidable. Yet, the Zealand fleet did not arrive; and the Duke saw, to his great satisfaction, that Antwerp had expended her resources without any important consequence; for the evil worked against him by the *Hope* had not rendered him hopeless,—and no sooner had the bridge been thus demolished, than he began to build it together anew. As to the *Fortune*, she

had been driven to the opposite shore near Santo Philippo, where she had struck on a reef, and sunk without effecting any purpose.

When the thunder of the explosion was heard in Antwerp, Frederico seized his wife's hand, pressed it passionately to his heart, and exclaimed in a tone of rapture,—"God be praised—there the fort must have been shivered—and the bridge annihilated!" "My father!" said Cassilda, in a half audible whisper. "Infamous pander!" growled Gianibelli, and hastened down to the harbour in order to give farther directions. At day-break, vessels were sent out to bring intelligence, and great rewards promised to the men, if they would sail past the bridge and announce the event which had so opportunely taken place to the commander at Fort Lillo. As soon as they had got beyond the bulwark, they were directed to send up fire-balls, in order that the Antwerp citizens might be assured that all had succeeded. The vessels returned, however, and their captains declared, that the bridge was still in its former condition, and the passage as impracticable as ever. "Impossible!" cried Frederico, "Heaven is not thus unjust; and

my labour cannot have been utterly in vain. The cowards have not ventured near enough to ascertain the truth." St Aldegonde, in consequence of these remonstrances, sent other ships, but the men were indeed panic-struck, and turned back without having reached the Spanish station.

The people now began to murmur; and Antwerp was more disquieted than ever; hints were dropped of treachery and connivance; no Catholic durst henceforth appear on the streets without danger of being attacked and insulted. Under these circumstances, Frederico levied fifty horsemen, and rode out, that he might convince himself what was the real conclusion of this affair. But even here he was disappointed; the enemy had advanced farther than he was aware, and he had not gone half a mile, when a band of Spanish pikemen came to meet him. "Comrades," cried Frederico to his own soldiers, "you are aware that we must have intelligence, let it cost what it may. Let us attack these men, therefore, though they are by number an overmatch, and if we take but one prisoner, our object will be gained." The horsemen, by whom he was attended,

were well chosen; they rushed outrageously on the Spaniards, who received them on their pikes, and stood with surprising firmness, while their musketry from the rear ranks kept up a murderous fire against the Netherlanders. The latter continued to press forward, however, and were successful; the Spaniards were obliged to give way; our hero took ten prisoners, and among these was the captain of the band—Fernando Nunez! With a dismal frown, as a Flemish dragoon began to plunder his person, he recognized Gianibelli, who bestowed on him a look of recognition equally dark and portentous, at the same time commanding the soldier to desist. Nunez grinned, and bit his lips with rage. "Traitor!" he exclaimed, "that God has given me into thy hands is indeed the severest punishment that might be inflicted for my sins!" Without deigning to make him any answer, Gianibelli rode back to Antwerp, and his troop followed him with their prisoners. "St Aldegonde," said he on his arrival, "I deliver into your charge the unworthy father of my beloved Cassilda. You will appoint for him a prison suitable to his rank, and forget not that he is *my* captive, and that it is of

the utmost importance for us to keep him here. But so far as I can understand the confessions extorted from the other Spaniards, the bridge is destroyed. I must have the conviction of my own senses, however. Give me, therefore, a ship, and I shall set out immediately, for the cowards who were last employed, had not resolution to venture within sight of the Spanish works. I shall pass by them, and, God willing, shall return hither with the Zealand fleet." He went, accordingly, followed by Cassilda's blessing and fervent prayers; she had yet no suspicion of her father's imprisonment. With his telescope raised, Frederico now stood courageously on the deck, while, at a curve of the river, he came within range of a small Spanish battery, by which he was immediately assailed. But this did not interrupt his progress; he seemed miraculously saved, and the vessel advanced, till he could distinctly see the ruins of the bridge. There, to his great vexation and astonishment, the Spaniards were again in full activity, and the nearer he approached, the more firmly he was convinced, that the Duke, in this short space of time, had in such manner repaired the bulwark, and supplied the breach with

iron chains, that it would be as impossible as ever for ships to make good their passage. A shower of musket balls now fell around him, and he perceived that his undertaking was quite hopeless. He tacked about, therefore, hearing peals of scornful laughter from the Spaniards, and arrived in Antwerp miserably disappointed.

Night had begun to close, when he disembarked on the quay, and, instead of asking questions, all who met him had already anticipated the truth, and passed by him timidly, and in silence. He hastened to St Aldegonde, whom he found at the Senate-House, where our hero had now the mortification of laying the disheartening result of his embassy before the assembled council. When he entered the hall, he found them engaged in a very serious debate, but, without waiting to inquire what subject had thus engaged them, he explained the full extent of their danger, concluding with a request, that they would immediately vote to him the means of making a second attempt similar to the former, but which, he trusted, might have a more fortunate termination. "The intelligence you bring to us," said St Aldegonde, "is no doubt gloomy and alarm-

ing; but you, at least, may on this occasion feel altogether free from self-reproach, while we, on the other hand, must confess, that we reposed too little confidence in your schemes, and, therefore, the fortunate moment has been lost. Antwerp is, in truth, much indebted to you, and it is doubly painful for one who, like myself, has always been your friend, to say that, instead of expressing our gratitude as we ought to do, we must now, for the sake of the commonweal, offend and distress you very deeply."—"*Must !*" answered Frederico with his darkest frown, "how then, and whence arises this necessity?" "Your wife," answered St Aldegonde, "is now in prison." "My Cassilda!" said he, starting as from a dream. "So it is," answered the Burgomeister coldly, "we found on the person of the Spanish captain, Fernando Nunez, this billet. Read it yourself, and then judge whether, with such proofs in our possession, we could act otherwise than we have done."

Frederico perused the letter. It was the same which Cassilda had written at Catharina's house, and placed behind the statue of St Peter. He laid it on the table without a word. "Besides,"

resumed St Aldegonde, "this mysterious billet has very probably been the means of saving the life of the Duke of Parma. According to accounts which we have received from the captives, Fernando Nunez, just before the explosion, made his appearance, and almost by violence led away the Duke from the bridge. In his gratitude for that interference, the Prince promoted Nunez to the rank of captain, after which it was the will of Providence, that, on the first service undertaken by him, he should fall into your power as a prisoner." Frederico still remained with his arms folded, looking sternly on the ground. "Nay, worthy friend," said St Aldegonde, "be not thus overcome. We were forced to act as we have done; we were under the necessity of conducting her to prison, in order that she might be safe from the infuriated populace. Be assured that we shall not forget your feelings as a husband, and that Cassilda shall be treated as leniently as possible." "But," murmured Frederico, "she has then saved the Duke's life?" "If you would wish to see her," added St Aldegonde, who did not hear these words, "this will not be refused to you." "No," answered Frederico, in a

voice of thunder, " not a word more of her, but act as you think proper. Only give me ships and gunpowder, and I shall again prepare for the Duke such a midnight divertisement, as he little reckons on, and at which no warning genius will appear for his rescue ; but instant activity is required ; the commonweal is at stake, and not a moment should be lost in granting me the supplies which I thus demand of you." With these words, he left the assembly, and the council soon after dissolved.

On the following morning, St Aldegonde came into Frederico's apartment. " Sir Knight," said he, " the truly great mind should soar above all ordinary passions. You seem to misunderstand the character of Cassilda, whose error we must in our hearts excuse, even though as judges we are forced to condemn her. Would you not desire to see her ? Ought she not to hear from you, even a few words, to say that you forgive her ?" " No !" answered Frederico, knitting his brows, " she now belongs to you ; she is wholly in your power, and I shall not interfere with your rights." " She wished to speak with her father," said St Aldegonde, " will you permit this ?"

" You are burgomeister," answered our hero, " fulfil your own duties, and forget that Cassilda is the wife of Frederico Gianibelli. As for my prisoner, Fernando Nunez, I grant him freely my permission to meet with his daughter. Chance has again brought them within the same town walls; I would not be the means of causing their second separation; and they may share the fate which hangs over them together." " Gianibelli," replied St Aldegonde, in a very grave and severe tone, " who knows how soon our last hour may strike, and how much we ourselves may then have need of compassion? Therefore, I beg once more that you will forgive your Cassilda, and that you will dismiss from your mind that groundless belief, that she has carried on any secret intercourse with the Duke. Were this possible, she would not have renounced him for your sake, nor fled from his protection in Spain. Moreover, I would advise that you should set her father at liberty,—for whom the Duke has offered a most important ransom. By giving him up, we shall receive back the brave Teligny,—and the citizens of Antwerp would bless you for adopting a resolution so noble."

" As to the ransom adequate for the Spanish captive, Fernando Nunez," said Frederico, " it is my part to determine what it ought to be.—So long as I live he shall remain in prison; such is my pleasure, and it is a resolution which I shall not forego to gratify the Duke's humour. Command me to devote my heart's blood, my life,—I am prepared to make any such sacrifice for your sake, and that of your commonwealth,—but as to the prisoner,—no !—he is mine, and I shall hold him fast !"—" But if the senate command his being set at liberty ;" said St Aldegonde, " if the people insisted that it must be so,—would you assert your own will against theirs ?"—" Nay," answered Frederico, " I would do more ;—in my disdain of your unjust conduct, I should leave Antwerp to her fate, you should never behold me again. I thought you had known Gianibelli better than to suppose that aught could be gained from him by threats and defiance !" For the first time St Aldegonde, in a mood of gloom and discontent, parted from his friend, whose mind was now torn by conflicting emotions. He, indeed, loved Cassilda as sincerely as ever, and his pride had been more wounded than his affection.

When St Aldegonde had taken his leave, he walked gloomily towards the window, and was stationed there, lost in thought, when Catharina van der Weert rushed breathless and agitated into the room. "If you have not lost all the feelings of a man," she exclaimed, "by the love you once bore to Cassilda, and the happiness you enjoyed in her presence, I implore you to have compassion on the poor orphan, whose father died on the scaffold, and whose lover now pines a hopeless prisoner under the power of our enemies. Grant the Spanish captain his liberty in return for that of Teligny,—your faithful and once cherished friend. Sacrifice but this much of your imperious will at the shrine of love, of friendship, and filial affection."

Frederico fixed his eyes gloomily on the ground, but made no answer. "You are silent," said Catharina; "your heart has become steeled against every emotion, and you will not utter one word of consolation for my distresses?"—"Nay," said Frederico, interrupting her, "you determined, of your own free will, that you would never again behold Teligny within the walls of Antwerp. By your own sentence, he was driven

out in his despair to meet the fate which has overwhelmed him. "Aye, too truly have you spoken. I did so," answered Catharina; "but since my betrothed lover fell into the hands of the Spaniards, I have bitterly atoned for the injustice of which I was then guilty. Even for that very cause I betake myself to you, in humble supplication, that you will grant me Teligny's ransom. To you alone I look for the recovery of my soul's peace—on your answer depend all the hopes that are left to me in this world!" She threw herself at his feet, but he raised her coldly and formally. "You have said but the truth," he exclaimed; "my heart is steeled against every emotion such as you labour to excite. He who has possessed and lost Heaven as I have done, thenceforth becomes the denizen, nay, the slave of hell!" At these wild words, she seized his arm once more, and looked at him imploringly—suddenly, however, as if struck by some secret recollection, she recoiled, and exclaimed, "What could I expect from the man who casts off his affectionate faithful wife—allowing her to pine away in a solitary dungeon, and who cherishes no other passion but that of wild insatiable

ambition? Farewell, Gianibelli! Catharina van der Weert came hither in her humility and affliction, with a poor entreaty, which you have rejected with disdain. But know, Signor, that the forsaken orphan will yet find other means of obtaining that justice which you have denied to her prayers!"

"Contemptible woman!" exclaimed Frederico, as she left his apartment,—and he became absorbed again in his own dreams; but, alas! of all sufferings to a manly generous spirit, this must be the severest, to feel that he struggles under contending impulses—that he is acting at variance with his own heart. Gianibelli's love to Cassilda was unconquerable and fervent;—oftentimes her well-known form rose on his imagination,—more beautiful, more attractive than ever, but then,—the detested visage of his rival, the prosperous high-born Duke came betwixt them, grinning in scornful triumph, and every after emotion yielded to jealousy and hatred. At those moments, too, when his love had gained a transient ascendancy,—when he almost determined to beg of the senate that she should be set at liberty, on the plea that she had but acted, for a

moment, the part of an affectionate daughter,—and that the Duke's rescue was the result of mere chance,—the question forced itself on his mind,—if Cassilda were freed, would she not also entreat him to take the ransom offered for her father, and could he ever permit the Duke to gain such a triumph?

For several days he continued under the influence of this conflict, but at last ambition prevailed. He determined to exert himself with more energy than ever, in hopes, by that means, to distract his attention, and allay the pain of self-reproach, but in vain. Meanwhile, Cassilda remained uncomplaining and perfectly resigned in her prison, where she had a cell less gloomy and repulsive than that of an ordinary captive, though the doors and windows were firmly secured with iron bars. One day it happened, that St Aldegonde and other senators came and questioned her more minutely than before, regarding the billet which they had discovered. She confessed, without the slightest hesitation or reserve, the circumstances by which she had been induced to write the lines,—adding, that she could not possibly repent of having thus once fulfilled her

duty to a father;—as to the Duke of Parma's life being saved, it had been the will of providence to make her the means of that result, but without any intention of her own. St Aldegonde now endeavoured to soothe her feelings for the present moment, and her apprehensions for the future. "I require no consolation," she answered; "an inward voice has oftentimes warned me, that with you—with Antwerp, my fate, whether good or evil, will be united;—on this account, I am tranquil, and prepared in mind for all that can ensue;—only I wish that my husband were convinced of my innocence, and that I have never been in thought, word, or deed, unfaithful to him. His displeasure is the sole cause of the pain which I now endure. Tell Frederico this, and reserve your consolations for him, to whom I well know that jealousy must prove a cruel torment."

On the afternoon of the following day, she was sitting, as usual, alone, and lost in thought, when the door opened, and her father, Fernando Nunez, appeared before her. "Is it *thus*, Cassilda, that we meet again?" said he in a stern rough tone. "My father!" she exclaimed, and would have

fallen into his arms, but he repulsed her, though not harshly. " I should despise and curse thee," he resumed, " did I not know that it is for my sake that thou art now doomed to pine in this miserable prison,—that because thou did'st not hate me, thou hast encountered hatred. Oh ! too well do I know all this ! During the few days that I have lived here a prisoner, I have heard, from the lips of numberless witnesses, how basely thou hast been deceived. The traitor who, with one word, could restore thee to liberty, loves thee no longer,—the beautiful rose is withered ; he has sated himself with its fragrance, and casts it away to be trodden into the dust." " No—no, my father !" exclaimed Cassilda, " that he still loves me is a truth felt in my inmost heart ; though his affection now seems to sleep under the influence of jealousy and wounded pride, it will awake and beam forth more ardently than ever ere it dies."—" And when we think of the generous noble-minded Duke," said Nunez ; " he whose love is unchangeable, who would himself have sacrificed all the pride of rank, and have led thee to the altar—" " Speak not of him, I conjure you," said Cassilda, in a tone of anger and

dignity; " those words become not a father to utter, which his daughter cannot hear without shame and aversion. Rather be to me a messenger of peace! I have had already my share of grief, and might I not be indulged, for a short space, the happiness of believing, even were it but a dream, that I am in the presence of a parent whom I can love and honour?" The rough soldier, from whose mind all softer emotions had long been estranged, could not withstand this appeal. He pressed Cassilda tenderly to his heart, and never spoke to her again of the Prince. Thus he was allowed to visit her every day for some weeks afterwards. Cassilda did not even receive any message from Gianibelli; and those interviews with her father, were the only variety afforded in her wearisome confinement.

There is no grief if it is unblended with self-reproach, to which music may not sometimes supply a congenial mode of utterance; and one evening Cassilda, with her lute on her arm, was stationed at the window by moonlight. The night had closed in with weather stormy and variable; dark clouds came ever and anon, driven

across the moon, that still broke out again with effulgence, rendered brighter by contrast. "An emblem of my life!" said she, while the tears shone trembling in her eyes. "It has been spent amid clouds and tempests; only brief intervals of unspeakable happiness broke through them, to illumine my toilsome pilgrimage. She raised her head, with its beautiful dishevelled tresses, and looked up to the starry heavens,—to the illimitable realms of the Almighty Father, who chastises where he loves, and guides all his faithful servants, through the rough paths of this life, to their home of everlasting rest. She struck some mournful chords on her lute; old remembrances crowded on her mind, and, in a low plaintive voice, she began to sing a Spanish ballad, describing the calm that follows a storm at sea,—when she was interrupted by a cautious knocking at the door. She started up, when a man, wearing a mask, rushed in; he made her a signal to be silent, and to follow him. Cassilda was now terrified; for she could not recognise in his figure any one that she had ever seen before. In his gestures he expressed the utmost haste and impatience—laying his hand on his lips, in token

that he dared not answer, when she demanded, "Who art thou?" At last he took her gently by the arm to lead her away, and, without farther reflection, she followed him. They proceeded through long vaulted passages, where their footsteps echoed strangely amid the reign of solitude and darkness, till, on arriving at a low Gothic door, studded with iron, it was opened, and they stepped out into the cold air of that stormy night.

"You are free, my beloved Cassilda," said a voice meeting her from without, and immediately she was clasped in the embrace of some one whom, in her confusion, she yet scarcely recognised. "Have you forgotten the voice of your own faithful Catharina?" said her friend—"And look,—here, too, is your father, who is now at liberty. Thank Heaven, my plans for you, as well as for him, have succeeded. But hasten, I conjure you, from this place—fly ere it is possible that you can be missed." Catharina seized her by one arm; her father supported her on the other side, and thus she was forced, for a considerable distance, to go with them. Suddenly she arrested their hurried progress. "Yonder—yonder is my home," cried she, pointing to the harbour, and to the house of

Gianibelli,—" lead me thither, or leave me alone, and fly before the avenging arm of justice overtakes you !"—" And thou wilt forsake me yet another time ?" said Fernando, gnashing his teeth with rage. " Here—*here* alone is my happiness," cried Cassilda, " and you would force me hence to misery and guilt. Here is safety,—elsewhere destruction !" " Ungrateful traitress," cried Nunez, exasperated to frenzy, and drawing his dagger,—" either shalt thou follow me to the Spanish camp, or this hour shall be thy last !" " Shrink not !" answered Cassilda—strike boldly ; I shall then fulfil my vow to Frederico—love even unto death !" Catharina had almost wrested the dagger from the madman's grasp. " Away, away !" cried she,—" if you would not sacrifice both your own life and mine. Cassilda, I shall remain with you. Go, go—I beseech you—this man will be your convoy ;" added she, pointing to the person who had brought her friend out of prison—" hasten, for if you remain for another hour within sight of Antwerp's walls, we are lost." Still growling out threats and imprecations against his daughter, the detestable Nunez at length retired.

CHAPTER III.

"THAT you would not return with him to the Spanish army," said Catharina to her friend when they were left alone, "I was thoroughly convinced. My Cassilda's heart is like a flower that will expand its leaves but to the chaste sunlight of a husband's love,—and I, too,—rejoice with me,—I have freed my betrothed lover, Teligny: I have broken his chains, along with those of Fernando Nunez. As for your captivity, how easy was the task for a sincere friend to find means of opening your prison gates!—The blessed religion of our ancestors gives us the courage, the strength, and ingenuity to fulfil every good and beneficent purpose."

They had, meanwhile, arrived at the house of Gianibelli, when Catharina retired, and Cassilda stood thoughtfully at the well-known threshold of her own home. Still a feeble light was visible from

the window of her husband's apartment, and at intervals she caught some melancholy dying tones of his guitar. She shuddered at these sounds,—"Heaven only knows in what state I shall now find him!" said she to herself, as with fear and trembling she passed up stairs, and knocked gently at the door. Frederico was seated beside a lamp, now almost expiring, though the flame rose fitfully at intervals, like the last struggles of a parting spirit, and illumed his pale grief-worn countenance. The bustle of his daily occupations served, in some measure, to distract his mind from gloomy reflections, that, in the still hours of night, gained double strength, and the mournful notes of his guitar rather deepened the impression of his utter loneliness. Watching the lamp's faint glimmer, he remembered how uncertain is human life, when the sources of joy are decayed by which alone existence is upheld;—the thought rose on his mind, and vibrated with a cold shuddering through every nerve, that Cassilda's long imprisonment might cause her premature death,—when the door opened very slowly, and she herself entered. Pale, trembling, and anxious, as Cassilda now

appeared, it was not to be wondered at that the train of his apprehensions should at first be strengthened, rather than dispelled. "Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, starting up—"it is her ghost!" But, in the next moment, the warm heaving bosom that was pressed against his—the long protracted ardent kiss that was imprinted on his lips—that embrace, and that kiss, so truly the same as in former years, convinced him that it was no phantom, but his own loving and beautiful wife, whom he now clasped in his arms.

"And you refused, then, to go with your father?" said he, when she had briefly narrated the adventures of the night, though without mentioning Catharina. "You did not leave me for the sake of that renowned Prince of Parma, who still loves you, but hastened to the melancholy home of your husband, who had allowed you to remain in prison, and refused to send even one message of encouragement and consolation. Oh! my Cassilda! you, who are in spirit so far exalted above me,—whose affection, like a divine flame, burns unchanged, and equally in joy and in sorrow,—when rewarded or oppressed, always faithful and ardent—forgive—if it be possible,

forgive me! Nothing shall ever more effect our separation.—Love even unto death!"—"And fidelity for ever!" answered Cassilda, blushing deeply; and, with these words, she sunk unresisting into his arms.

Among the Antwerp senators, who learned next morning the escape of both prisoners, there arose an extraordinary alarm and commotion. The people had been excessively enraged against Gianibelli—looking on him as the sole cause that their favourite Teligny had not returned to Antwerp. The assembled senators considered the flight of Cassilda very important and hazardous, and were not a little astonished when Gianibelli made his appearance in the council-chamber, and informed them that his wife had been taken out of prison against her own will,—that she had escaped from her father, and returned to his house, thus affording the surest proof, that she never could have cherished any design against the commonweal of Antwerp, or in favour of the Duke of Parma,—but had been led to write that unfortunate billet by a transient impulse of filial duty. He begged of the senate, therefore, that they would ratify her liberty,

which was agreed to without the slightest opposition; and they were the more disposed to this measure, as they now received a dispatch from the Spanish camp, with news that Teligny had been freed. He had been obliged, however, to grant his word of honour, that he would not bear arms for the freedom of Antwerp. The same ambassador who brought the Duke of Parma's letter to the senate, had also one of Teligny to Catharina, of which the contents were:—

"You have sworn that you will never meet me again within the walls of our native town;—for this reason, though with an almost broken heart, I have entered into conditions not to defend the citizens of Antwerp, by whom Adrian van der Weert was brought to the scaffold. But there are other stations where my sword may yet be wielded for my native land, and to one or other of these I shall now hasten. Farewell."

The Spanish Prince had now restored his floating bridge, with its railing of masts, into as formidable a condition as before. He had strengthened his outer-works also, in order to

ward off any future attacks of Gianibelli's fire-vessels. The latter was, meanwhile, restless and indefatigable in his preparations for a new assault;—the senators were also better disposed to listen to his schemes than before;—so that, in a short time, other ships were sacrificed, in order to be filled with powder,—and, accompanied by a flottilla of flat-bottomed boats, were sent down the Scheldt;—consequently, the bridge was demolished a second time, or, at least, injured more than on the former occasion; but, on account of adverse winds, the Zealand fleet was prevented from making its appearance:—so this adventure proved ineffectual. A third attack was now made; which last proved altogether abortive, for the Spaniards were too much on their guard; and Gianibelli himself was obliged to inform the senate, that he knew not what to recommend, and that they should themselves devise some new mode of defence.

Only beneath his own roof, in the arms of his beloved Cassilda, who had now become dearer to him than ever, could he find any solace or mitigation of his distress at these many failures. He was, indeed, driven almost to despair, and ex-

posed himself to every danger,—sometimes with pike in hand, joining with the brave Scotsmen, and within the next hour taking his place as a private dragoon with the Netherlanders. On the slightest intimation of a skirmish, he hastened to the spot, being resolved that, whatever were the result, his own exertions should not be spared. From all those engagements, he returned home to Cassilda, without even the slightest bodily wound, though with a mind harassed and torn by the most violent emotions. *Her* composure, however, was unconquerable. "My beloved Frederico," said she, "let us enjoy the last drops that the cup of life affords us, with hearts unchanged, cheerful, and innocent. The death-bell of Antwerp and her liberty will sound, perhaps, ere long, and, in the same hour, we shall have finished our allotted task, and have done with this world."

The Spanish Prince, who had been informed by Fernando Nunez of Cassilda's unabated constancy and resolution, was afraid that this heroic woman would not survive her husband's death. In order, at all events, to save her life, he sent an embassy to Gianibelli, offering, that if, in the pre-

sent state of Antwerp, he wished to leave the town, he should be at liberty to do so;—that he might go to England, Germany, or whithersoever he was most inclined,—adding, that money should be supplied for his expences, and that the Prince would guarantee his safety in accepting this proposal. Our hero answered as follows:—"Gianibelli will never turn coward, and fly from his destiny. Either shall he sing a 'Te Deum' on the walls of this town, freed from its invaders, or bury himself under its ruins. *So* also would Alexander of Parma act, if he were in the place of Gianibelli, who thinks himself not less honourable, in the fulfilment of duty, than the Prince who has thought proper to insult him by the message just received."

While he traced these lines, Cassilda stood by the table, and fixed on him a penetrating gaze. "The high-born and the great," said she, "are, methinks, both vain and foolish!—They believe, forsooth, that they alone are heroes,—and that, for the sake of rescuing our own transitory lives, we, the humbler denizens of this world, must be content to make any sacrifice. Mark you, Frederico,—with every hour that now passes,—with

every cannon shot which is fired to no purpose, —I count the moments of my life,—and make up gradually my reckoning with fate. Seek not, I pray you, for death, in those paltry engagements, where your existence would be offered up in vain. Save it rather, as long as you can still be of service,—and when, at length, the Spaniards shall force their way over the ruined ramparts of this town, let us join hand in hand;—I shall go with you to the breach, and we shall die together in its defence."

The plans of destroying the bridge, and gaining a free passage through the Scheldt, had now been completely abandoned. On the suggestion of Gianibelli, it was resolved to bore through the dam at Covenstein, so that the whole country might be thrown under water; and, after this, to venture a last attack on the Spanish station. Count Hohenlohe, Admiral of the Zealand fleet, approved of this scheme, and promised his assistance. From the sharp experienced eyes of the Duke of Parma, however, the importance of this point had not been concealed. Even at the commencement of the siege, he had guarded Co-

venstein, in such manner, with ramparts and batteries, that any attack in this quarter must require both powerful forces, and the most heroic resolution in their commander.

All the smaller dams had been cut through ;—already the Zealand ships advanced on their new sea-room towards the bulwark at Covenstein ;—and, on the following morning, the attack was to be made. A frightful silence now reigned through the desolate streets of Antwerp. On that evening, every citizen remained at his own house, surrounded by his family, believing that these might be the last moments which he could enjoy in their society. It is a strange and fearful emotion which prevails resistlessly in the minds of men, when, in the decisive hour, their long cherished hopes are passing away. If the next hour has only struck, then there is no longer any suspense,—no choice between good or evil fortune,—nothing more left to hope or to fear ;—the die has fallen, and their fates are decided immoveably and changeless for ever !—On this evening, too, Gianibelli sat at home with his wife ; and, in silence, they gazed together on the setting sun. " When to-morrow that orb again descends," said he, " deep,—blood-

red even as now, then the lot of Antwerp and ours, too, will be decided. This undertaking is our *last* resource." "The last!" repeated his wife in a faint voice. "Aye," said he, "my dearest Cassilda,—assuredly the *last*. If victory be not ours to-morrow, then we may crawl back like reptiles into our narrow cells, but we dare speak no more of conquest, nor of liberty. Yet, a few days or hours perchance, we may contrive to live, but this is all. The proud Duke will advance,—one rampart will give way after another,—and, meanwhile, famine will deprive the miserable inhabitants of spirit, even to fall nobly. By to-morrow's dawn,—by the next blood-red sun gleams, Cassilda, the strife begins; before evening it is over, and, perhaps, all is lost!"

The morning had not yet broke,—the stars were still gleaming in Heaven, when four illumination vessels were dispatched from Fort Lillo towards the dam at Covenstein. The large ships of the Zealand fleet were also drawn out in line opposite to the fortifications. Between the bridge, and the rampart of St George, an ascent was made on the dike, and, with wonderful alacrity, a

breast-work prepared, in order to disunite the two hostile batteries. Under this protection, the pioneers now laboured to cut through the dike, and every soldier, being aware how important was the undertaking, worked with redoubled strength. The Antwerp fleet also began from the other side to attack the Spaniards; and the infantry from town supported the brave Zealanders, who stood nobly by their breast-work, repulsing every attempt made against them.

Intoxicated with their first success, the commanders thought that their victory was already certain. They began even to empty provisions and merchandise from the Zealand ships, and load with them their small Antwerp vessels, thus losing and frittering away the precious time. The task of the pioneers on the dam was no longer carried on with the former rapidity and perseverance. The energy of the workmen became, indeed, quite lamed, when Count Hohenlohe and St Aldegonde went into a small merchantman, which they had loaded, and exactly at the decisive moment, put about to Antwerp to celebrate there the triumph which, in their foolish vanity, they believed that they had won. Amid the ringing

of bells, and thunder of cannon, they entered the harbour, where Gianibelli stood with a band of his brave Scotsmen, impatiently waiting for intelligence from the bridge. They told him briefly what had occurred. "These should be no peals of rejoicing that are now rung," he answered. "These are passing-bells that receive you here,—and your cannon-shots are no better than the last groans of expiring Antwerp. Herr burgomeister, and my lord admiral, your presence here is useless, and your absence from the scene of action may have consequences the most disastrous. On, then, my faithful comrades!" added he, addressing himself to the men that he had collected round him. "Away to the scene of conflict, by land or sea, for in this hour our friends have need of us."

The Duke of Parma stood, meanwhile, with the true composure of a hero on the bridge, and gave the necessary orders to guard against the fire-ships, which were now incessantly sent against him. He had adopted the precaution, that, when these floating mines were pressing on the barrier, it might be opened in several places, so as to let them pass and injure the Zealand fleet, rather than himself. By dint of almost supernatural

exertions, and a thousand times risking his own life, the heroic Prince had the satisfaction at last of perceiving that this attack would be ineffectual against him. Being satisfied that his favourite bulwark was out of danger, he hastened with several hundred Spanish pikemen to defend Covenstein, and arrived there when all was nearly lost. The stake bastion having suffered by the incessant fire of the fleet, had almost given way,—the brave Gamboa, its defender, lay severely wounded,—most of his soldiers were killed; while, on the other hand, the forces of the Netherlanders increased every hour in number. The Duke then collected about him almost all the troops that he could find in the trenches or elsewhere,—placed himself in the van, and advanced in order, by his presence, to restore the sinking hopes of his party.

Under shelter of the temporary breastwork, between the stake bastion and that of St George, now fought the best—the very kernel and marrow of the Flemish troops. Here, on this decisive point, they knew that the liberty of their native land was to be decided,—and they were determined in this place to conquer or die. At

length Gianibelli arrived with his little band, and landed at the very same moment when the Duke of Parma had succeeded in reducing the confused Spaniards into order, and was leading them onwards for a new attack. Fate had thus once more brought the two heroes together. They fought closely, man to man, shield clashing on shield. "Cassilda" was the battle-cry of Gianibelli, and, shouting her name aloud, he inflicted a frightful blow on the Duke's helmet; but, in the next instant, the pike of a Spanish soldier struck him to the ground. The Netherlanders and Scotsmen fought nobly round their leader;—they covered him with their shields,—rescued him, and he was carried back on board ship;—but when Gianibelli thus fell wounded, the last courage and spirit of his men were effectually crushed. The Italians and Spaniards now contended with each other for the honour of being the first at the breastwork. It was mounted and won accordingly. Antwerp's final hopes died with the few faithful pioneers who were slain in defending it. The day drew near to that fatal and blood-red sunset that Gianibelli had anticipated with such gloomy forebodings.

For several days our hero was confined to his couch, languishing under severe wounds. His faithful Cassilda sat by him unwearied, holding his burning hand within hers, and all the while she was tranquil and resolute. At length, St Aldegonde came one morning into his room with a letter. "Were it possible, my dear friend," said he, "to bring you any message of consolation in a time like this, perhaps I might do so now. The Duke of Parma, who has come close to our gates, and commanded us to surrender, has sent this open letter addressed to you. Herein, he gives you express permission (as you are now wounded, and can no longer be of service in defence of Antwerp,) to depart from hence to some quiet abode, where your health may be fully restored. You may go where you will, along with your wife. The Duke pledges his word of honour that no measure shall be taken to effect your separation, or in any way to distress you. Besides, he offers to give hostages for your security, and it is, therefore, my counsel that you should accept of his proposal; the enemy are close upon us,—and we are no longer safe from their cannon-shot and grenades. You re-

quire rest, and here, least of all, can you obtain a fair chance of recovery ; you must directly fall into the power of the conqueror, who now leaves you at perfect liberty to depart." The wounded hero was not unmoved by this offer. " Though in courage I am thine equal," said he, " yet, Alexander of Parma, I must allow, thou surpassest me in generosity, as well as in good fortune. Let the Duke know," added he, in a feebler tone—" that I am not ungrateful ; but that Gianibelli, and his wife Cassilda Nunez, will survive or perish with the liberty of Antwerp,—and if the city fall, will enter gladly through the dark gates of the tomb, to the realms of everlasting liberty and rest." Having thus spoken, he sank back exhausted on his couch. " And you, noble lady," said St Aldegonde, turning to Cassilda, "can you approve of this resolve?" " I shall share the lot of my husband," said she, " whether in joy or in sorrow,—sun-light or darkness, I shall live or die with him !" " Generous, noble-minded victims !" said the venerable St Aldegonde, may Heaven yet protect you, and have compassion on our unfortunate city."

But, in a short time, famine began to show her

direful power over the devoted inhabitants of Antwerp, while the enemy closed the circle always more narrowly around them. Every one, even the bravest, now despaired of rescue;—the people murmured at their fate, for hunger was yet more formidable than the swords of their assailants. Under these circumstances, the assembled senate debated, whether it would not be better to give up the town, after having made some tolerable conditions, than to wait till the worst had befallen them. While they were deliberating on this question, the great doors of the hall were opened, and Frederico Gianibelli was brought in on his couch, borne by his faithful Scotsmen.

"Once more," said he, in a faint voice—"I have come hither;—the dying man appears before you, that he may warn you for the last time! —Often, indeed, you have refused his counsels, as if they had been mere visions; but follow his advice, at least for this once.—Do not, I admonish, I conjure you—do not open Antwerp's gates to the Spaniards; defend your town to the last—from street to street, and from house to house;—think on Alba, and his pillory formed out of your melted cannon;—think of the scaf-

fold, on which the noblest of your people fell by the hands of the executioner. King Philip still lives, and the Duke of Parma is but his slavish implement, as the Duke of Alba proved before. Far better were it to perish as heroes—to bury yourselves in the ruins of your fortress, than to die, like degraded criminals, on the block. Farewell—this is the last appearance I can ever make in your senate-house, which I have so often entered, when I was yet in the bloom of youth and health —with those hopes fresh and vigorous in my heart —which are now withered for ever." Here he paused abruptly, and made a sign that his attendants should remove him, which was done; and after his retreat, the councillors sat for a long time in gloomy silence, with their eyes fixed on the ground. "Aye, truly," said Aldegonde at last, "Gianibelli is in the right. We ought to feel in our hearts the courage and resolution to die for our native land. Death is far better than the yoke of Spanish tyrants. Friends—countrymen, if you think as I do, let us join in one last effort." Yet the voices of a multitude, who now forced their way into the hall, interrupted his heroic exhortations. They demanded

outrageously, that the town should be surrendered; famine had driven them to utter despair,—and St Aldegonde found that he must give way to their violence.

From the silence of the cannonade, and the deathlike stillness of the streets, Gianibelli, at his own house, apprehended what had taken place. "The cowards have yielded," said he to Cassilda, at a late hour of the evening. "Do not weep, dear child," added he to Catharina von der Weert, who could no longer restrain her tears; "all will soon be over. Ere the next day dawns, the dream of life will have ended." Cassilda kissed his pale lips, and, with a cheerfulness like that of a sainted martyr, nodded her approval of what he said; while Catharina, who, since Gianibelli was wounded, had not left her friend, now went out in search of intelligence.

Our hero's suspicion was confirmed. Antwerp had surrendered; and to-morrow's rising sun would no more shine on the free city, but on miserable slaves. The contest was past; and it was not till after a long refreshing sleep, that Gianibelli awoke on the morning of that fatal day. He heard the

drums beating, and the music of a Spanish march. "They are drawing near," said he; "I recognise the well-known sounds that have so often accompanied me to the battle-field. Yet, Alexander of Parma," added he, "proud and prosperous as thou art, think not that *my* presence shall heighten and adorn thy triumph! Gianibelli shall not fall living into the hands of his conqueror." With these words, he violently tore the bandage from his wounds. Cassilda was aware of his design, and did not hinder him; but Catharina shuddered with horror, and averted her eyes.

"Love even unto death!" said he, now expiring; "this vow, my beloved Cassilda, you have faithfully preserved inviolate—fidelity after death and for ever!" These were his last words; and in a few moments after he expired.

Fernando Nunez accompanied the Prince of Parma to Gianibelli's house. "My resolution is fixed," said the Duke, "I must once more see my brave enemy, much as he has done to offend and injure me. I shall forgive him, and ask his forgiveness—we shall be reconciled together;—nor need Cassilda fear my presence. No;—if

death indeed has already called him hence, she may retire into a convent, and there fulfil her vow of changeless fidelity." The house of mourning and death was silent; they opened the door for themselves, and found Cassilda kneeling in prayer over the pale remains of her idolized Frederico. "Come not nearer!" she exclaimed, "he has escaped from your triumph. His fortune sank,—his hopes were withered—you have now nothing to fear from that hero who alone could have opposed your career of victory. But in death as in life," added she, as the Duke advanced towards her, "he comes betwixt us. Love has travelled with me to his grave;—fidelity shall now be my guide to find him in a better world!" She had Gianibelli's dagger in her girdle;—she now plunged it into her heart, and fell silent and motionless on the body of her husband. "When my last hour shall arrive," said the Duke, "would that it might be my lot to appear with such an angelic guide before the judgment-throne of Heaven! And, without daring to approach the sacred remains of Cassilda and her lover, he left the house. Fernando Nunez now felt, for the first time, that

the grief of a bereft parent's heart is of all sufferings the deepest and most overpowering.

Catharina von der Weert was still present to perform the last sad duties for her friend, who was laid with her husband in one coffin, and Catharina strewed them with flowers. "Love even unto death—Fidelity for ever!" was the inscription which Alexander of Parma placed over their grave, where he many times shed tears of repentance and retribution. Time has now destroyed this monument of true love; but not long since, a cross was still visible on the spot where Gianibelli received his death wound at Covenstein.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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THE FIRST OF MAY;

OR

WALLBURGA'S NIGHT.

FIRST OF MAY;

OR

WALLBURGA'S NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

It happened on a very beautiful evening of the year 163–, that a young lover and his mistress, by name Rudolf and Alice, were seated together on the banks of the Lake Constance in Switzerland. The sun had long since vanished behind the mountains, only the rugged pinnacles of the opposite shore on the south still shone with a roseate splendour. Twilight shades had settled dimly in the vallies, where wreaths of white vapour collected, and were slowly mounting towards the pine-tree forests above. Meanwhile, it was delightful to see how the stars, shining out one

by one, and the red light from these lofty cliffs, were mirrored in the water; and, as it happened to be Sunday evening, no rounds of rural labour interrupted the quiet mood of contemplation. Only the light beating of the lake waves on the shore, the voice of a blackbird, or the call of a lone shepherdess from the Alps, broke the solemn stillness.

Rudolf and Alice were faithfully and ardently attached to each other. Many a severe trial had they already undergone;—they were long separated, and had encountered painful scenes of contention among relations,—but those evils were now past; their hearts heaved with mutual affection, and with gratitude to the Giver of all Good, for, on this Sunday, they had been regularly betrothed in the chapel of the Benedictin convent, and their wedding was appointed to take place early in the following month.

Rudolf's father had been a rich scythe-smith, well known by the name of Master Christoph, whose comfortable abode, with its workshop, foundry, and farm-buildings, lay in the neighbouring forest, where the machinery required for his art was driven by the rapid and thundering currents

of the Giessbach. Rudolf was an only son, and his father earnestly wished that he should be a clergyman, in which case, he might, in due time, become a person of no little consequence in Switzerland, where, in those days, the presumptuous conduct of the freemen, as they called themselves, rendered the counsel of pious well-educated monks very desirable in promoting general tranquillity. Thus, in imagination, Master Christoph already beheld his son invested with gold chain and cross in the chamber of the Austrian representatives, or even at the Emperor's court; delighting himself so much with these anticipated honours, that, on this account, he willingly renounced the hopes he should otherwise have entertained of seeing his old age cheered by a circle of blooming grandchildren, for whom his property would have supplied ample means of support. Rudolf, however, had unobserved, and in silence, formed plans very different from those of his father. Even from earliest youth his inmost heart had beat with indescribable emotions, when bands of soldiers happened to stop on their march, and obtain refreshment at the farm-house. Then, if they perchance talked of their services under the banners of the great Wal-

lenstein, and of the ferocious depredations of the Swedish marauders, his eyes gleamed, and his blood circulated with new fervour through every vein. He watched with the greatest anxiety every expression on the lips of the speaker,—and afterwards, in his play hours, the battles, of which he had thus caught the description, were represented with the aid of his young comrades, over whom he had unawares gained a kind of supremacy. Of this disposition, so obviously betrayed, his father was determined not to take any notice. Rudolf was established for his education at the Benedictin convent, though, instead of profiting by the opportunities afforded him there, he only looked on it as a very miserable prison. But time brings changes; and when, after these boyish impressions, he stept into the years of adolescence, his feelings were more fully developed, and it was proved how utterly unsuited he was to the life and duties of a priest. It happened that he was chosen to play a principal part at a very grand procession on Corpus Christi-day. He was the handsomest and among the oldest of the scholars, so that he was chosen to carry the largest banner, and stand at the rustic altar, reared, according to Swiss fashion,

on the banks of the lake. After the priest had read the Gospel of the day, there stepped forward from the procession six maidens clothed in white, with garlands in their hair, and baskets of flowers in their hands. They sang a choral hymn to the blessed Virgin, and then strewed their variegated wreaths on the altar. One of these girls, by far the handsomest of the party, happened to steal a glance at Rudolf from her innocent blue eyes, that shone under her coronet of narcissus flowers, when, as if struck by a magician's wand, he became lost to all besides that passed around him, and almost let the banner drop out of his arms. She also seemed equally confused, and after stretching out her hand, drew it back, and remained motionless like a statue, blushing with her eyes fixed on the ground, till, on a signal from one of her companions, she hastily threw her gifts before the altar, and retired to gain her former place in the procession.

From that moment, never did the cherished image of this beautiful stranger fade from Rudolf's remembrance; and in spite of school-tasks and discipline, he contrived, in a few days, to find out her name and place of residence; nay, more, he

determined that he would see her and speak with her, though this could happen but seldom, and not without risk of discovery. Her father was very poor, and lived at a remote cottage of the mountains,—where he contrived to maintain his household by his own hard labour, and the produce of a small field. By circuitous and unfrequented paths through the forest, where he was sure that no one would meet him, he contrived to make his way thither, and it was easy to read in Alice's looks, when he first surprised her by coming, at the risk of his neck, down the rocks behind her father's cottage, that she had not forgotten the tall graceful standard-bearer of the Corpus Christi procession.

From that day onwards, the two young people were in the habit of meeting as often as their mutual plans of secresy would permit, and if the slightest inclination towards a monastic life had ever existed in Rudolf's mind, of course it must now have been completely overcome. Accordingly, he took the first opportunity of declaring to his father that he never would become a priest, though, of course, he was on his guard not to mention the greatest obstacle that stood in his

way; but watchful suspicion, aided by chance, had already discovered what the young man imagined to be securely veiled from all the world. His father fell into a violent rage, and threatened him with lasting resentment, even with his malediction, if he dared to cherish a single thought in favour of the contemptible goatherd's daughter, or offered another word against the cherished plans which had been laid for his future life. Not only should he now attend the school as before, but, according to an agreement that Master Christoph had already made with the Abbot, Rudolf should be received as a novice into the monastery; he should live there night and day, and be treated altogether like a younger member of the fraternity.

As it might have been expected by any one who was not, like Master Christoph, led astray by his own imperious temper, the consequence of all this was, that Rudolf disappeared that same evening and was nowhere to be found. The scythe-maker, indeed, tried to comfort himself by insisting that his son could not have travelled to any great distance, and that he would soon return again, when he found himself in want of money;

but although inquiries were made at every house in the neighbourhood, not a single trace of the runaway could be obtained. After some time it was proved, however, that, in the neighbouring town, there had been a recruiting party, who had, by large bribes, endeavoured to gain soldiers for the army of the Arch-duke Leopold Wilhelm, as the danger from the inroad of the Swedes into the heart of Austria grew every day more urgent, and their generals, Banner and Torstensohn, were marching through and ravaging Bohemia. At this intelligence, the recollection of Rudolf's love of a military life fell, like an insupportable weight, on his father's heart. Indeed, about three weeks later, all doubts and surmises were at an end, for Master Christoph spoke at the market town with a travelling artisan, who gave a frightful account of the cruelties committed by the Swedes, bringing, at the same time, Rudolf's last greeting to his friends, and entreaties for his father's forgiveness and benediction. This man had already seen the lost youth, mounted on a fine horse, among the Pappenheim Cuirassiers, in the square at Linz, where the general mustered his troops, and dwelt with particular satisfaction

on the appearance of his young and promising recruits.

Now, then, Master Christoph's fine schemes and cherished hopes were completely dispersed. Hitherto, the notion that his son had only concealed himself for a time, in order that, by this artifice, he might forward his own views, had kept up the old man's courage and usual severity ; but the misfortune which he had long dreaded had fallen upon him, and not only was it fruitless to talk of the advantages to be derived from ecclesiastical dignity, but he could not even calculate on his son's life, who might fall in the very first engagement. Most willingly would he now have resigned every ambitious hope, if he could have once more possessed his son ; but in vain did he send letters through the Benedictin Abbot to the general ; for the regiment had already marched away to Bohemia, and in such disastrous times, there would be no chance that any man would obtain leave of absence.

Three years had, in this manner, passed away. Travelling artisans and merchants who attended the annual fairs, sometimes brought intelligence and letters from the now distant army. Notwith-

standing Rudolf's dislike to the Benedictin convent, he had not altogether failed to profit by the instructions afforded in the school there; and being a ready penman, he sent many written tokens to Alice and his father, both that he continued in good health and spirits, and that his affectionate remembrance of them was unchangeable. Painful, indeed, as the separation had been to Alice, she would rather that her beloved Rudolf should be stationed among the Pappenheim cuirassiers than with the Capuchin monks, for, of his fidelity she never entertained the slightest doubt, but was convinced that, if only his life were preserved, he would return to her as constant as ever. At length news came that the youth had in such manner distinguished himself, as to be promoted to the rank of cavalry sergeant, and Master Christoph began to be comforted with the reflection, that, in those days, soldiers even of the humblest origin might rise at last even to fame and fortune, so that his anger quite subsided. Finally it happened, that, after the contracts of peace were signed and sealed at Osnabrugh, the old man fell dangerously ill; and consequently a letter was written to his son, who could now easily ob-

tain furlough, or, if he wished for it, his final dismission. Rudolf hastened directly to attend the sick-bed of his once more loving and reconciled father, who lived only so long that there was time for mutual explanations, leaving to the young soldier, with his parental blessing, the whole of a property, which in Switzerland was looked upon as very considerable.

Henceforward Rudolf gave up all thoughts of returning to his military companions; for he had already seen enough of the world, and could retire from it with honour. Nor had Alice been deceived in her confident anticipations; for he had no wish but that of leading her directly to the altar, and of sharing with her the fortune which had thus devolved on him. Meanwhile, however, the return of the young soldier, who was at once handsome, rich, and distinguished for his gallant conduct in the wars, excited great attention in the neighbourhood. On the following Sunday, when he stood at the fountain in the market-place, waiting for the opening of the church doors, and dressed in his gay hussar uniform, with his red sash, honorary medal, large boots, and above all, the stately helmet with red

feathers waving over his shoulders, the eyes of every woman, whether old or young, were of course turned towards this dazzling visitor. All of them remarked how well his military attire became his elegant form, which, indeed, was such as a statuary might have chosen for a model; while those who had been acquainted with him before, observed how much he had improved within the last few years, though, in despite of his warlike appearance, his fine eyes beamed with as much kindness and affability, as if he had never been absent from among them. There were not wanting also wise people, who calculated how much ready money his father had amassed, and estimated the worth of his farm and iron-foundry; so that, from that moment Rudolf became an object of the most flattering attentions from every family where there were unmarried daughters,—but all this passed over without leaving a single trace on his faithful heart.

Nor would such wise plans and speculations have led to any consequences; but there was one young damsel named Gertrude, daughter of the Baron's land-steward, on whom, unfortunately, his appearance that Sunday morning had left an

impression far too deep to be effaced; nor did it seem reasonable to doubt that she, who was beyond comparison the richest and genteelest girl in the village, would succeed in winning the affections of this distinguished youth. Of course her father joined in these anticipations, and no method was neglected that seemed likely to promote such a result. Rudolf was frequently invited to the steward's house; the most brilliant prospects were held out to him for his future life, which, with the help of such a father-in-law, who was a person of no small consequence in the country, might doubtless have been realized. At last a more direct mode of proceeding was adopted; an absolute proposal of marriage was made on the part of the girl's friends; and, not without the most violent displeasure, she found out that the heart which had appeared so cold and insensible, had long since cherished an ardent and unalterable affection for the poor and almost unknown daughter of a cottager on the mountains. Thus enraged, but not utterly discouraged, they made every possible attempt by stratagem, especially by spreading abroad the blackest calumnies, to alien-

ate his affections, so that Alice was tormented beyond measure.

Henceforward Rudolf heard from all quarters the most wicked insinuations against the character and conduct of his intended bride; and her father was intimidated by downright threats and defiance. The youth, however, pursued the even tenor of his way; he was vexed only because Alice had been thus disquieted; and at last having, in spite of the steward's menaces, received her father's consent, he saw himself at the very goal and summit of his wishes.

Now, then, they were met, as we have already said, on the banks of the lake; they sat under a thicket of elder trees newly covered with the rich verdure of spring; and their attention was quite absorbed in one of those delightful dialogues of which the charm is only known to true and affectionate lovers. Twilight, meanwhile, gave place to the fast gathering night—the glow-worms began to twinkle amid the darkness, and over a high cliff, covered with fir-trees, that rises out of the lake, gleamed the slender solitary crescent of the new moon. The time had passed away unobserv-

ed; but now the owls began to shriek, and the night-hawks burst, flapping their wings, from the covert. Alice started often at these noises; even the rustling of a green frog or lizard among the grass made her tremble, and she clung closer and more ardently to her bridegroom for protection. He laughed at her childish fears, and tried to encourage her, but in vain, for she became every moment more timid. A hundred stories that she had heard of supernatural beings who, at certain hours, acquire unconditional supremacy, crowded at once on her mind, and, even under the quieting influence of Rudolf's presence, she was quite unable to conquer her inward agitation. Even the young man's attention was at last raised; for, while Alice was in this paroxysm of terror, he actually heard light steps through the darkness as of some one approaching them. He lifted the almost fainting girl in his arms, and walked forward to meet this intruder. "Who is there," cried he, "who wanders here at such an hour?" The moonlight, though very faint, was yet such that he could well distinguish a female form wrapped in a mantle, that came along the steep path leading from the mountain, and now, in-

stead of answering him, only uttered a strange hollow cry, passed by the lovers, and went on rapidly, taking the road towards the village.

Alice was so frightened that, for a long time, she was unable to speak; for, according to her creed, the mysterious figure could have been no other than that of a witch, who was returning from some of her abominable orgies on the hill-top, where there stands a circle of large stones, and the ground is blighted by the unhallowed feet that dance at midnight, so that the grass cannot grow there. She believed, too, that Rudolf, by his question, must have disturbed the sorceress in her incantations, by which means he had stirred up implacable malice against himself, and must suffer, consequently, for all his life to come. In vain did the youth try to argue her out of these notions, and insisted that, by the moonlight, he had indisputably recognised the rich steward's daughter,—that it was his acquaintance Gertrude who had passed by them. "Nay, nay," said Alice; "what would induce a girl of her habits, —so proud, forsooth, and always so finely dressed, —to be wandering here at such an hour? How could she trust herself all alone in these woods?

You forget that the witches—God protect us from them—have power to assume any form they please; and though you had recognised the features of the steward's daughter, this affords no proof whatever that we are in safety."

During this discourse, Rudolf had, without molestation, brought his trembling bride home to her father's cottage; and, for his part, resolved to think no more of that evening's adventures. On Alice, however, it had made an impression far too deep to be forgotten; but to her who was the cause of all this—to Gertrude the steward's daughter,—the consequences were still more fearful and insupportable. Rudolf had, indeed, been perfectly in the right, when he thought that he recognised her; nor was this the first time that, at the rising of the crescent moon, she had come forth in disguise, and chosen the lonely road towards the mountains. In this unhappy girl was indeed realized the poet's image of the wounded hart, that flies restless through the fields and woods, trying in vain to escape from the torment which the hunter's barbed arrow had inflicted. After their first meeting, a long interval had elapsed before she was aware of the difficulties

she had to encounter in her plan of gaining his affections; and when the truth was at last discovered, her attachment had already acquired too great an ascendancy to admit of its being successfully resisted. Besides, had this been possible, the will, alas! was wanting, even as much as the power to effect so laudable a purpose. Gertrude was neither pious nor resigned, and, with her father's encouragement, she made every possible attempt to break the bonds of affection between Rudolf and Alice, till, finding that calumny and threats were in vain, she determined to avail herself of other methods. It was very certain that many extraordinary events and changes had happened in their neighbourhood, which could not be referred to natural causes; and it was also well known to her that there were individuals, especially five or six old women, against whom, indeed, no legal proofs had hitherto been brought; yet, every one was firmly convinced that these persons had it in their power to ruin the fortunes of all whom they regarded with dislike. At such a time, it was precisely a character of this description to whom Alice wished to have recourse, nor had she failed to discover one who was ready to be-

come her confidante, and aid her detestable schemes. Accordingly, they had already been at work together, and, but that the lovers were always guarded by the blessed cross and rosary round their necks, and were in heart so pious and innocent, the complete wreck of Alice's worldly hopes might very soon have been accomplished.

CHAPTER II.

FRUITLESS as all such endeavours for some time proved, Gertrude's unhappy passion remained unconquerable ; and at length when it occurred one day at church, that the betrothing of our hero and heroine was proclaimed, and their names read aloud, the full conviction of her misfortune in all its terrors came upon her, so that, after an ineffectual struggle with her emotions, she fainted, and was carried out by her friends. This, of course, excited attention. When the service was over, and the community lingered as usual in the market-place, there were many persons eager to tell what they had heard of Gertrude's disappointed hopes,—the violent conduct of her father,—and the despair by which she would, of course, be overcome, now that Alice's marriage was irrevocably fixed. Female neighbours were, of course, not wanting, who repeated all this at the steward's

house; and Gertrude, as if it were not enough to feel that all her fond expectations were for ever baffled and dispersed, had the mortification to find that she was made a subject of raillery, or affected commiseration through the whole village.

Through that fatal Sunday, in all the bitterness of her grief and disappointment, she waited impatiently for the sinking of the sun, and then hastened forth, in this direful emergency, to take counsel from her wicked confidante. Wrapt in her mantle, she had stolen out in the twilight from her father's house; had unobserved reached the witch's cottage, which was situated in a rocky ravine of the mountains, and, with great vehemence, demanded that the long promised aid should instantly be granted her, if all were not to be given up and lost. Grinning with an abominable aspect of confidence and composure, the old woman recommended her to have patience, declaring, at the same time, that she was then employed on certain incantations, which, when completed, would enable her to meet all the wishes of her young friend, as the stars had of late been unusually propitious. The utmost that she required at this moment, in order to succeed, was

to be allowed to pluck seven hairs from Gertrude's beautiful tresses. With these words she stretched out her long bony arms like the talons of a fiend, and forced her guest down on a low root of a tree that served in place of a chair. But at the first touch of the old hag Gertrude started up and screamed aloud, so that it was not without violence that the sorceress, laughing scornfully at the poor girl's pain, effected her purpose. Having obtained the seven hairs, she instantly led Gertrude (who was now stunned and speechless) to the door, thrust her out with resistless force, and turning the key in the lock, called aloud, that she might come again when the now crescent moon was at full, but not sooner.

Yet it was not till after a long interval that Gertrude was able to move from the door of this unhallowed abode. Her head felt violently painful, and a nameless horror, such as she had never before experienced, had quite overpowered her. In the cottage, all was now silent; the twilight had already faded away, and in her gloomy desolation she stared at the black Alpine cliffs, that rose like gigantic spectres between her and the dusky heaven. A mysterious murmuring per-

vaded the wood ;—even the breaking of the light lake waves on the shore, seemed to her disturbed imagination fraught with some terrible meaning. At length she hastened down along the path leading through the ravine ; but after she had turned the corner of the cliff, and the slant moonbeams fell on her way, every moment she seemed to behold some horrid apparition ; the bats shrieked and whirled in circles round her head,—even the rustling of a leaf made her tremble. Then, too, on approaching close to the banks of the lake, through the thicket of elder trees, she actually heard whispering voices, and saw the outlines of a human form. She went on,—she recognised the tall commanding figure,—the well-known accents of Rudolf,—of the youth whom she yet so fervently loved, and had lost perhaps for ever. It was he, the dazzling hero for whose sake alone she wished to live, and Alice was in his arms ! At that moment she uttered the hollow cry that was heard by them with so much terror, and then rushed homewards to the village.

Thereafter, with what impatience did the miserable girl count every day and every hour, till the coming of the full moon, that only promised

her new anxieties and desperate encounters, while, with the dawn of each revolving day, the betrothed lovers met in their calm happiness and delight, looking forward, no less, with rapture to the evening, as it would bring them one day nearer to their appointed marriage. At last the full moon rose in her glory over the mountains, and Gertrude, having wrapt herself in her mantle so that no one could recognise her, hastened out, taking the loneliest path up the hills, when, on arriving at the cottage, the door was open as if prepared for her reception. In the witch's apartment, there was no light but that of the moon,—now flickering and uncertain, for clouds, driven rapidly by the wind, often came across her splendour. Behind, in the rock against which the cottage leaned for support, there was a small narrow gateway, forming the entrance to that mysterious cavern where the old woman carried on her incantations, while the front room wore the appearance of extreme poverty, and the negligent simplicity of a Swiss *paysanne*. Gertrude now looked at her hostess, and was once more seized with a fit of extreme horror and apprehension; for every feature in that visage, always forbidding, seemed

to-night supernaturally distorted, and fraught with unutterable meaning. The hag, perhaps, was aware of that effect which she had produced, for she grinned as if in scorn and mockery, at the same time advancing to the inner door-way, which she opened, and Gertrude, without venturing a word, watched for the result. In the interior of the cave a fire was visible, on which stood a boiling kettle. The sorceress brought a pair of bellows, with poker and tongs to rouse the flames, in which task Gertrude advanced to assist her, but was instantly repulsed. "Fool," cried the old woman, "if thou should'st now dare to cross this threshold, thy life would be the forfeit. Remain where thou art unless I summon thee!"

Gertrude then stood trembling at the entrance; —the kettle boiled more fiercely, and a thick stupifying vapour mounted in wreathes to the ceiling, while the visage of the old woman, shown by the lurid glare of the faggots, became so repulsive and intolerable, that Gertrude was obliged to desist from gazing at her. At length the words "Now—now! Look yonder!" roused her attention, and through the dark wreathes of smoke which had collected in a distant corner of

the cave, she beheld a luminous spot that always increased in size and brightness, till it assumed the form of a large mirror. Therein, after some time, she distinguished the well-furnished interior of a room, where a man was sitting at a table, busily employed in cleaning a musket and other military accoutrements. This man was Rudolf, —not his mere picture,—but himself,—as vividly and unquestionably before her, as she had seen him but a few days ago. Two children were also visible; one of whom played on the floor, the other slept in a cradle near the fire-place. At last, the door of the apartment opened; the figure of a woman entered, in whom, at the first glance, Gertrude recognised herself even as if she had seen her own reflection in an ordinary mirror. This figure went directly up to Rudolf, (who saluted her with every sign of confidence and affection,) then took her place by the fire, lifted the younger child from the cradle, and laid it on her bosom, while the father looked round on them with an expression of delighted emotion.

At this scene, Gertrude's heart beat high, and her eyes gleamed. She it was—the wife of Rudolf—and *her* children were *his*. A cry of joy and

exultation escaped from her lips; but, at that moment, with a frightful crash, the whole illusion vanished from her sight. The old woman seized her by the arm, and forced her from the gateway, which was violently closed. She then broke forth into a torrent of reproaches, on account of the cry which the poor girl had uttered at a time when she should have been silent as the grave. Gertrude, however, allowed the old hag to scold on, without making any remonstrance, only asking now and then—"will it ever be so—shall I ever be his wife?" "Thou hast already seen it," answered the witch: "for the present, let this suffice, and trouble me with no farther questions." With these words, she forced the girl, as before, out of her cottage, adding, that, as she had behaved that night with such inexcusable folly, she should never come thither again unless she were sent for. This interdiction was, indeed, of little consequence, for had not Gertrude already beheld the veil lifted from futurity, and herself established as the wife of Rudolf! What could she wish for more in this world? She now walked home as if treading in air, and quite absorbed in her own dreams,

though in what manner such happiness was ever to be realized, she could not even conjecture, for his marriage with Alice was now near at hand, and no stratagem or hindrance occurred by which she could obtain a farther delay. Yet, notwithstanding all this, she continued to rely on the witch's divinations, sometimes also reflecting with complacency on her own pre-eminent wealth and beauty, and on Rudolf's good sense, which might enable him before the marriage had taken place, to see the rash folly of his choice. All the interval, however, she watched with miserable and wasting anxiety for every word of news that could be gathered from the neighbours, still clinging to the hope, that, sooner or later, some occurrence must take place by which her utter misery might be averted.

Such was her impatience, that, notwithstanding the old woman's injunctions, she had already been twice at the cottage on the mountain, but whether its owner were really absent, or only in bad humour, remained unexplained. The door was always firmly closed against her, nor, when she called aloud, could she obtain any answer. At length only two days remained of the

interval that must elapse before Rudolf's marriage; and, moreover, Gertrude had been informed that the witch's hovel had been found with the door open, empty and deserted, so that she had certainly left her habitation without any intention to return. With bitter self-abasement and regret, Gertrude now felt convinced, that, in addition to her other misfortunes, she had been basely deceived; that the hag had only mocked at her vain credulity, and, in her malice, would rejoice at the pangs thus inflicted. It is not then to be wondered at, if, under circumstances such as these, the unhappy girl eagerly embraced an offer made by a female friend, who wished for her as a travelling companion to a town at considerable distance, in which there resided a sister of Gertrude's mother. If thus stationed at her aunt's house, she would at least be freed from the influences of a scene, where every object reminded her of her once cherished hopes, and, above all, she would be spared the torture and humiliation of being present at Alice's wedding festival.

Next morning, then, she found herself with her friend, moving along in their small caleche,

and once more, when they had arrived on the opposite shore of the lake, she looked, through tears of bitter envy and regret, on the well-known wooded mountains, where she could distinguish the smoke rising from Rudolf's dwelling—that flourishing little farm, where, after another day, her hated rival would be established in all that happiness which the affection of the handsomest and best husband in the whole canton could bestow—once more she renounced, and cursed in her heart the witch who had so wickedly deceived her with false hopes, and in a state of the deepest melancholy and despondence, she arrived at the dwelling of her aunt.

In due time, she was tormented there by a description of Rudolf's marriage festival,—how dazzling and handsome the bridegroom had appeared in his hussar dress at the church of the Benedictin Convent, and how meekly and modestly the bride had conducted herself in her grand attire of white silk, embroidered with pearls! Then there was an account of the grand banquet which followed the wedding, and, above all, an encomium on the generosity of Rudolf, who had given next day an entertainment to a large number of

the poorer class, and bestowed on each individual a present of some article of dress, with a small sum of money. In short, it seemed that, wherever Gertrude took refuge, she could not escape the poisoned arrows that were aimed against her. Her pride was more than ever wounded; her heart was crushed; and yet, notwithstanding all this, her unhappy passion remained unabated and unconquerable.

Meanwhile, however, circumstances occurred, which tended in some degree to abstract her attention, and afford her the means of pastime. A very wealthy ironsmith, (or hammermeister, in the language of the Swiss frontier,) who had given up business, and now lived as a man of independent fortune, often came to the house in which Gertrude was stationed; and though she had now rather lost the first bloom of youth, and assumed a haughty capricious demeanour, yet he did not like her the less for these characteristics. Indeed, as to her temper, which repelled all other suitors, the idea was rather flattering to him, (for he was exceedingly vain,) that he should be able to obtain the favourable ear of one whom others looked on even with a kind of awe, not

very consistent with the feelings of true love. Besides, she was the daughter of the Baron's land-steward, and would have a large dowry, which, in his estimation, formed no slight inducement to continue his addresses; and, finally, he made a formal proposal, intreating that her aunt would speak in his behalf. Gertrude took the affair into consideration;—the man was advanced in years;—his person was neither promising nor agreeable;—moreover, his abode was on the Alps, at a remote distance from her native village. These were formidable objections—but then his wealth—the idea that she, too, ought by this time to have secured a husband—and the lurking wish to prove to the world, above all, to the proud youth who had deserted her for a goat-herd's daughter, that she could form a more important connection, determined her to accept the offer now made. Only her triumph must be complete, and she therefore proposed it to her suitor as an indispensable condition, that he must give up his farm on the mountains, and come to reside at her birth-place. The wish to be near her parents and other friends served as a pretext for this arrangement, and as to her own views,

she scarcely even dared to confess them to herself. In truth, she only wished, by means of her husband's fortune and her own dowry, to humble the man by whom she had been rejected, and to cast her hated rival completely into the shade.

Of course, then, the villagers were all taken by surprise, when, after the lapse of a few weeks, the steward's daughter returned as the wife of the far-famed hammermeister, who was well known to be one of the richest freemen in the canton. Immediately she took possession of the handsomest house that could be obtained for a high rent, and provided herself with the most costly furniture and extravagant dresses. Every one talked of this great news, sometimes laughing at the rapid change in her affections, and sometimes admiring her extraordinary good fortune. Only the two individuals aimed at, on whom all this was designed to have made a deep impression, were perfectly indifferent, indeed totally ignorant, as to what was going forward. Rudolf and Alice were too happy within their own domestic sphere to think of their neighbours, and had lately been occupied with plans for a new farming establishment; so that it was not till a whole fortnight had passed

by, and people had almost given over the subject, that Alice heard on a Sunday at church of Gertrude's marriage. At this she would have sincerely rejoiced, had she not been informed that the bridegroom was old and ugly; but, on her return home, she communicated the news to her husband, who scarcely made any reply. Afterwards, as they were sitting hand in hand before their house-door, watching the glories of the evening sun as he sank behind the Alps, and the lake reflected his golden radiance, their hearts expanded in rapture and in silent gratitude to Heaven;—Gertrude and her wealthy husband were by them utterly forgotten.

It fared very differently, however, with the wife of the hammermeister, for she could never forget Rudolf. According to all outward appearances her circumstances were brilliant and prosperous. Their house, as we have already said, was one of the best in the village;—their domestic economy was richly provided; and from every fair her husband brought her home new furniture, costly jewels, and embroidered gown-stuffs. However, the worm of envy and concealed love still gnawed at her heart. As often as she saw Ru-

dolf by accident at church, or at any holiday festival, she was dreadfully agitated; and at such moments felt always a burning pain in her head, where the old hag had, now nearly a twelvemonth ago, plucked the seven hairs, when she visited at the cottage. In health and temper she became gradually changed, so that her discontent was visible to every one; and when at last the birth of a fine boy seemed to complete the happiness of Rudolf and his wife, her torments increased so as to be quite insupportable. Just at this time, it was said that the old witch had again been seen at the cottage. Huntsmen and foresters, who were always the first to bring intelligence of any such occurrence, declared that they had found traces of her wonted nightly orgies within the Druid's circle on the hill-top. Gertrude treasured up all these intimations, and there arose in her heart a violent longing to visit the frightful old hag, if it were only to put her to the question, and reproach her for the vile delusions and false prophecies of which she had been guilty. For a while this wish was combated in her mind by better impulses, or by the conviction that she would but incur new disappointments; till at last the wish

prevailed over all other considerations. Gertrude went to the abode of the old woman, where the door was no longer closed against her. On the contrary, she was invited to visit there as often as her domestic duties would permit; and her whole situation seemed in a short time to have assumed a new and promising aspect.

CHAPTER III.

GERTRUDE'S endless caprices and uncertain temper, which had often rendered her presence intolerable to her husband, and to every one else in the household, now quite disappeared. At holiday meetings, too, she seemed always tranquillized by a kind of inward confidence; she entered cheerfully into the amusements of her friends, and looked with an expression of unaffected kindness on Alice, whom she often invited to share her seat in the church. Of course, our heroine was incapable of answering coldly or rudely, if the hammermeister's wife afterwards wished to enter into conversation, nor could she dwell on former injuries, if she saw any token of repentance, and a desire to atone for the past. At last, this intercourse was carried so far, that one fine Sunday, Gertrude, who had frequently praised the beautiful situation of Rudolf's farm, accompanied his wife on her walk

all the way home. This first visit was short ; but it was followed by others that were longer. Alice thought herself obliged to return these visits ; but went as seldom as possible,—for, to leave Rudolf and her child, even but for an hour, was to her like giving up all the world. Besides, he had, from the beginning, warned her against making too intimate an acquaintance with one who had betrayed such evil intentions ; and this alone would have deterred Alice from making any nearer advances,—for Rudolf's wishes were to her powerful as any law. But then her husband was obliged at last to give up his suspicions ; the hammermeister's wife seemed so polite and kind, without any effort or exaggeration, from which he could have guessed that she had selfish views. It was said that her worldly circumstances were now even better than at the time of her marriage ; and he was so willing to believe that even the most wicked and perverted heart might become changed, and seek to compensate for past errors, that his dislike had been gradually conquered, and he did not offer any objections when he saw the two friends together.

Only one circumstance sometimes disquieted

him, and almost roused his former suspicions. This was, the rumour that occasionally came to his ears of Gertrude's having been discovered in a renewed intercourse with the old hag that lived in the cottage above his farm, and every one believed that this woman was a notable sorceress. Yet these rumours were so little confirmed by evidence, Gertrude's conduct was so specious and plausible, that he did not venture to draw any fixed conclusion. Besides, she always contrived to make her visits to Alice when he was not at home, so that he seldom thought of the matter. Of course, too, this caution had the effect of preventing the least approach of jealousy, which might otherwise have completely dissolved the friendship of the two young women.

Towards the return of spring, Rudolf was obliged, on account of the state of his affairs, to make a journey of considerable length, and Alice thought with great pain on the separation that awaited her. On this change Gertrude built her cherished hopes and plans more firmly than ever; but, of course, her outward conduct continued guarded and circumspect. The day came at last, when Rudolf was obliged to depart; and,

as his return could not be expected before the month of May, many a long hour of widowed solitude hung over Alice, so that Gertrude made her visits as frequent as possible, in order, as she said, to divert her friend's attention. The labours of the spinning-wheels at night had now ceased; both men and women servants were almost always in the fields; and now it was that Gertrude, in these lonely evenings, began to acquire a complete ascendancy over the unsuspecting Alice, who was best amused by the relation of long wonderful stories, of which the former, as it soon appeared, had a store quite inexhaustible. Above all, they spoke of extraordinary dreams, forebodings, and apparitions, in which Alice was a firm believer; but when such legends had been discussed, the hammermeister's wife went on to speak of other mysteries, which for her auditor, seemed almost to open a new world. She insisted that there were certain mortals who could make themselves invisible, or appear in different places at the same time,—that they were able to pass over a vast extent of country in a single moment,—even to call up the

dead from the grave, and force them to reveal all secrets, past, present, and to come.

Pretending great caution, and under promise of secrecy, she made Alice acquainted with some adventures that had happened to her during the preceding year, when she was on a visit to her aunt, who, according to the hints that she gave, significantly enough, was one of the initiated in these occult sciences. At this disclosure, Alice could not help betraying that her curiosity was roused, and though she shuddered almost at every word which her companion now uttered, she still asked one question after another, till at length Gertrude ventured to inform her, that it was very possible to become an eye-witness of all these wonders, without any participation in the guilt (if there were guilt) by which they were attended. "But," said Alice in an anxious tone, "how can this be proved? Could any mortal be a looker on, without incurring all the risk of these mysteries?"—"Why not?" answered Gertrude. "Certainly there are precautions to which a spectator might have recourse, and there are limits which even the supernatural powers thus invoked dare not infringe. Prudence and

care are no doubt absolutely required. We must not rashly step over the prescribed circle, nor be led astray, either by our curiosity or terror. Above all, it is indispensable to avoid speaking aloud. Only let such rules be observed, and there cannot be the slightest danger. For example, you see that I am here, as well and cheerful, moreover as sincere a Christian as you are, yet I have more than once been a witness of such incantations, and were I to describe what I have seen, it might, indeed, appear to most people a mere dream of a disordered brain."

Now, it should be understood, that Alice, like most mountaineers, had been from her earliest youth fond of such marvellous stories. Every word that Gertrude uttered was only adding fuel to the flame of her own heated imagination. All those wonders of which she had formerly dreamed, seemed about to be realized, and though she dared not say at once that she would be glad to have ocular proofs, yet many little artifices, by which she always led Gertrude back to the same subject, whenever they were left alone, plainly betrayed how deep was the impression that had thus been made on her mind. At length, her deceit-

ful friend ventured to advance one step farther, giving her to understand, at first, by slight hints and afterwards in direct terms, that she had been occasionally more than an idle spectatrix at these ceremonies; moreover, that she herself was acquainted with many spells and precepts by which natural means might be used for supernatural effects and though, at this intimation, Alice evidently drew back and shuddered, yet, still she became tranquillized, when she reflected that Gertrude's behaviour, for a long time, had been quite irreproachable; her husband's farming establishment was so successful, that it seemed as if a blessing rested on their house, and, whatever had been her design on Rudolf twelve months ago, yet no one could deny that she was a regular attendant at church, and appeared there always as a devout Christian. After this conversation, therefore, she not only kept up her intercourse with Gertrude, but was always more and more deeply drawn into the snare.

Now, the latter end of March and most of April had past away; Rudolf was expected come, within, at farthest, about ten or twelve days; and Alice's heart heaved with delight to

think that she would so soon behold her husband and the father of her darling child. Gertrude too was on the alert, full of confident anticipations that her vile plans were at the point of being fulfilled, and reminding herself at the same time, that not a moment was to be lost, and no method left untried to complete her purposes. So it happened, that, on a mild pleasant evening in the end of April, the two friends were sitting together at the door of the farm house, and for some time Rudolf's return, and the preparations that Alice had made to welcome him, formed the only subject of their conversation. Now, however, the colours began to fade on the landscape, and distant objects were lost in confused masses, till at length the stars had, one by one, shone out and were reflected in the Giessbach, which, after thundering like a cataract over the mill-wheels, passed before them in its quieter course to join the waters of the lake. In the dense thickets on the shore, and on the slope of the mountain, it was already dark night, and fire-beetles hovered round them with their silent green light,—Gertrude all the while seeming to watch these winged lamps with great earnestness, so that now and then an exclamatio

of surprise or anxiety betrayed how much her attention was excited. Alice was much struck when she observed this, and her thoughts involuntarily returned to her old subjects—of supernatural incantations,—till suddenly a clear ball of fire rose from the elder-tree thickets on the hill-side, came towards Gertrude, hovered for some time right before her, then moved rapidly away and fell into the mill race, where it was extinguished with a hissing noise in the water. "Aye, indeed," said Gertrude, "I expected no less! I shall not fail to come."

At these words, Alice started up affrighted, and stared at her companion. "What means all this?" said she, crossing herself, and keeping at a distance;—"Foolish girl," said the other, "why should you be alarmed; it means only, that I am invited to the grand festival of the first of May?"—"On Wallpurgis' night," said Alice with increasing fear, "and you would venture to go then?" "I cannot well act otherwise," said Gertrude, "for to neglect such an invitation, if it has been received, would be very seriously resented; to accept it may be attended with much entertainment."—"Good Heaven, *you* Gertrude," answered Alice, "you would go to the Blocksberg

mountain, where the devil holds his court,—where all the demons"—"Hush, hush!" said Gertrude shaking her head, "what foolish representations are these? It is easy to perceive that you repeat only what you have heard, and that your information has been derived from people who are absolutely ignorant of this matter. There is nothing so frightful or dangerous as you suppose—of this I can positively assure you. "Were you then already there?" said Alice: "Once," replied Gertrude, "a year ago; my aunt took me with her." "Your aunt," said Alice, "was she *here* then? I must have heard of her coming." "You force me to laugh at you," answered Gertrude, "she certainly was here, but only for a moment; nor did she arrive in her caleche with post-horses as you perhaps expect. She took me away in the night in a very different carriage, that goes fast and sure enough; nor were we seen by any mortal." "You rode on the fire-shovel perhaps," said Alice, "or the hearth-broom." "Alice," said Gertrude, "don't speak so foolishly I beg of you—just like the ignorant common people; yet why should I vex myself, or wish to explain the matter to you? Such things,

in short, are what they are, and to you cannot be of any consequence; for that you will not travel with me I am very certain."—"Of that, indeed, you may rest assured," replied Alice, "but, after all, I should like to see how you set out on your journey."—"Nothing can be more easy," rejoined the other; "but it is better to say no more on the subject. You are by nature far too timid, and, to confess the truth, such adventures are safe only for those who are stout-hearted and resolute."

With these words, she paused abruptly, seeming to wish that the conversation should end there. For some time, Alice remained silent; but what she had seen and heard to-night was far too wonderful to be forgotten. She could not refrain from asking more questions, and at last gained so much confidence, that she wished to hear some description of what really happened at the grand meetings on the Blocksberg mountain,—whereupon Gertrude gave such a magnificent account of a fairy banquet, at which all the guests appeared in glittering dresses, and were enlivened by the most ravishing music, that the picture thus drawn could not fail to remain impressed in the most glowing colours on Alice's recollection. Some days had yet to

pass away before Wallpurgis' Night, and Gertrude's visits were not so frequent, being interrupted, as she said, by preparations for her journey. But, meanwhile, whatever she said at their short meetings was artfully contrived to heighten her friend's curiosity, especially as she insisted that the grand assembly might be seen by an unconcerned spectator without the slightest danger —especially without any risk of becoming a less devout Christian than before—of which, indeed, Alice always had her friend as a living proof before her.

All this, however, deeply and slyly as it had been planned by Gertrude, failed to obtain the wished-for object; for Alice was far too pious to engage in any such enterprise, and, above all, would never have undertaken such a formidable voyage, without the knowledge and consent of her husband. Only this much she thought that she might safely allow herself—to behold her friend set out in her nondescript vehicle; or, if neither traveller nor carriage were to be seen, it would be a strange thing to hold conversation with one who remained all the while invisible. So it was agreed upon that Gertrude, on her journey,

should knock at Alice's window, when her friend would look out for a moment, and convince herself that the account she had received was not a mere fable.

The night of the first of May had at length arrived, and the full moon was in the sky, illumining all the silent country with her enchanting radiance. Alice had retired as usual, but lay sleepless on her lonely bed, while alternate thoughts of her absent husband, and of Gertrude's wonderful stories, conflicted in her mind. Then a small clock which stood in her room struck slowly eleven. Alice felt an ice-cold shuddering, as from some undefined danger, pervade every limb, and just as the clock ceased to strike, she heard a slight knocking at the window. "That must be Gertrude," said she; "but now it seemed also as if she heard an audible voice, the tones, perhaps, of some guardian spirit, that said to her, "Hush—hush!—make no answer!" But the knocking was repeated, and the clear moonlight threw into the room the shadow of some one that stood at the window. "She is not invisible, at all events," said Alice, "and it would be rather unkind, after she has taken all this trouble, not

to answer her signal." She rose, therefore, put on hastily most of her usual attire, and opened the lattice, at which Gertrude stood magnificently dressed, but in glaring unusual còlours. "You see I have kept my promise," said she, with a strange unnatural smile. "I am here, and my carriage too is in waiting."—"Nay, I see no carriage," answered Alice; "you are on foot."—"What nonsense!" said the other; "of course, I have alighted; but if you will come to the threshold of the front door, you will see our equipage standing yonder at the corner of your field." "You promise me, then, that there is no danger?" said Alice.—"What a needless question!" answered Gertrude. "How can it make any difference to you whether you stand at the door or the window?" Again Alice heard the same voice of admonishment—"Do not—do not go!" She went, however; but, determining not to cross the threshold, stretched out her neck at the half-open door, and actually descried some dim object stationed as her friend described; but to which she could not attribute any distinct form. She saw, however, that, instead of horses, there were two enormous monsters, shaped like bats, that waved

their black leathern wings, as if with impatience, in the chill night air. Gertrude, meanwhile, had put her arm round Alice's waist, as if to bring her into the proper position to see this detestable equipage, when, all of a sudden, the poor girl felt herself seized, as by the grasp of an irresistible giant or demon. In vain did she shriek aloud, and implore her friend to have compassion; she was forced out of her house towards the field. The carriage advanced to meet them; and in an instant she found herself seated in it by Gertrude's side, when they directly mounted up into the air. Louder and louder she now screamed for mercy; but in vain. Her senses forsook her for a space, and, when she revived, she could only descry the moonlight gleaming on the lakes of her native land, at an immeasurable distance beneath. Now she began to feel for the cross and rosary, which she had unfortunately left on her bed, and would have implored every saint in the calendar for aid; but Gertrude, aware of what was passing in her mind, laid her hand anxiously on her lips, "Remember—remember your lessons," said she; "not a word—not a name must be pronounced here that would bring us into danger. Be silent,

for you are in my power; and every attempt of yours to escape will only end in your destruction." Alice obeyed; for she was but too well convinced of the horrible truth which she had now heard. As she looked downwards on the awful realm of space, and beheld from afar, towns, seas, and mountains, as in a map,—or lost them all in one indefinite even surface,—every nerve of her frame vibrated with terror, so that she could not have spoken. With bitter self-reproach and repentance, she thought of her husband's repeated warnings against forming such a connection, which might have saved her from falling into the power of this accursed sorceress. She reflected, too, what dreadful agitation he must encounter,—what despair awaited him if he returned home and did not find her there;—above all, when she remembered her forsaken helpless child, her inmost heart was agonized, so that she had not strength even to moan or weep.

How long they had travelled Alice knew not; but, suddenly, she was aware of a detestable noise in the atmosphere—a whizzing of wings, and screaming of many voices. It seemed at once as if the before empty space were filled with monstrous

owls and bats with human faces, besides a thousand nameless forms, all so hideous that she was glad to shut her eyes for protection,—in silence committing her spirit to Heaven and the glorified saints; for, as to sublunary life, she believed that it was lost to her for ever. "Now, then, we are at our journey's end," cried Gertrude; and, at these words, our heroine felt that the violent motion of the carriage decreased, and they sank gradually downwards. Alice opened her eyes, and, by a red glaring light, like that from the hot embers of a furnace, she beheld the summit of a woody mountain, which seemed to be in flames, and yet nothing was consumed; the tall fir trees stood unscathed amid the lurid radiance,—not a leaf nor blade of grass seemed to be injured.—Meanwhile, on a fiery platform, surrounded by a circle of moss-grown stones, were visible a multitude of hideous shapes, whirling vehemently in the dance; others were floating and chasing each other in waltzes through the air, accompanied, instead of music, by a noise of hissing, howling, and whistling, so intolerable, that Alice lost both sight and hearing. Forgetting, too, all the directions that had been forced on her, she exclaimed, in a

loud voice, " Jesus—Maria !" At that instant, with a tremendous clap of thunder, the whole spectacle vanished away. She was enveloped in thick darkness, and felt herself again falling, sinking through the air. She thought that death was now inevitable,—recommended herself to the mercy of Heaven,—and lost all self-possession.

CHAPTER IV.

THE morning had arisen in all its gentlest beauty and luxuriance, for it was on the 2d of May, the month of sweet songs, flowers, and blossoms. The sun mounted up over the fir-tree woods, with his beams chasing away the last vapours of the night that had lingered in the meadows, and all nature seemed to rejoice. Then, behold! under the shelter of a green hedge, there lay a hapless female wanderer, our poor deluded Alice, who also was awoke by the mild genial influence of spring, and lifted up her heavy eyes, to look over a wide level country, with houses, towns, and church-spires indeed, but where all was strange, and she could not distinguish a single object that she had ever seen till now. She wondered even at her own existence, could not carry on any connected train of thought, nor could have explained how or from whence she had come hither.

It required a long time before she was sufficiently collected to make remarks on the new country in which she was thus placed; but, at last, she observed that there was a smooth high road running through fertile meadows and fields, and leading to a town of considerable size, with more than one church tower; but this place was far distant, and even among the houses and hamlets, there was not one which seemed nearer than half a German mile. Then she was so exhausted, that she scarcely knew how it would be possible to reach any of those dwellings, and still less what story she could tell to account for her present distress, or to protect herself from being seized, and perhaps imprisoned as a mischievous vagrant. Some resolution, however, must be taken. She rose up with great difficulty, and tottered for a while along a narrow foot-path. Here it chanced that a good-humoured peasant-lad came to meet her, driving a flock of geese across the fields, and Alice summoned up courage to address him, begging to know the name of the nearest hamlet, and of the large town at a distance? His answer, though he spoke in German, was in an accent to her so strange and un-

usual, that she could hardly understand him. She next inquired to what sovereign the country belonged, and, on his answering, remembered that she had heard it sometimes from her husband at the time of his campaign against the Swedes, and that she had always supposed the distance to this prince's domains to be very great.

The lad meanwhile had past bye with his flock of geese, and Alice was left there quite confounded, and as irresolute as before; but she tried once more to rouse her spirits, and walked on towards the village. It was vain, however, to hope that she could reach it, and once more, in her desolation and feebleness, she threw herself down on the grass, and began to weep bitterly.

Soon after, the sound of approaching steps excited her attention, and, looking up, she saw a man advanced in years, dressed in black, with a dignified calm countenance, who, on coming opposite to her, stood still, as if from a benevolent wish to assist the distressed. She begged him to tell her how far she had yet to go in order to reach the hamlet of which the boy had told her the name,—then ventured to ask how far it was from hence to her native town? But the man

could give her no information. "Or, how far, then," said she, "to Linz on the Danube?" "Oh! my child," said he, "that must be two hundred long leagues;" whereupon Alice became deadly pale, and a moan of despair broke from her inmost heart. The stranger seemed much interested. "Whence com'st thou my dear child?" rejoined he; "and what brought thee into our country, where thou art an absolute stranger?" But what account could the poor girl have given, that would not have seemed a mere groundless fable, and, therefore, have excited suspicions against her? The whole weight of her misfortune seemed as if, for the first time, to fall on her mind. Again she threw herself on the grass, and wept more bitterly than ever. The old man, however, would not leave her, and repeated his questions. "I am schoolmaster of this parish," said he; "I know most of the inhabitants, and if I were but sure who, and what you are, I might, perhaps, be able to obtain you relief." Alice felt the necessity of preparing some story to which he would listen, but was afraid to speak without more reflection. "Have but a little patience," said she, "and I shall tell you all; but

just now I cannot speak. I shall soon be better."—" Well, daughter," said he, " I am sorry that I may not stay with you now, for my duties call me hence, but, in half an hour, I shall pass this way again, and if I should overtake you on the road, we shall speak farther."

During this interval, Alice, with that love of truth which was inherent in her nature, felt that it was almost impossible for her to contrive any narrative that would be listened to. Most ardently did she wish to tell all that had really happened to her; but then, the dread that she would incur both hatred and suspicion,—that, in consequence, she would never more behold her husband and child, overcame her scruples, and when the schoolmaster returned, she informed him, that she had been engaged as a servant by an English family at Linz, who intended to make a long but rapid journey through Vienna, Braunschweig, and other towns, then across the north of Germany towards the sea-coast;—that, not being able to bear the fatigue of travelling, she had fallen sick, and they would not wait till she recovered, but had unkindly deserted her. She was now better in health, and wished to

make her way homewards, but without money, and distrusted by every one, found this impossible. It was more, perhaps, by means of her innocent looks, and even by the tones of her voice, than by this story, that she won the confidence of the old schoolmaster. "My dear child," said he, "I should indeed be glad if it were in my power to enable you to reach home; but the distance is too great—even if I wished myself to go thither I have not enough of money. But where are the people now, that left you so cruelly?" Alice had luckily remembered, that the prince whose name she had heard from the boy driving the flock of geese, possessed a large town named Braunschweig, and answered, that all she knew of them was, that they intended to go thither; but she could not hope that they would remain there for any length of time, or that it would benefit her to inquire after them. "But," added she, "if it were possible to find any one who would employ me as a servant, I might at least earn enough to support my life. I am but a poor farmer's daughter, well accustomed to labour, and not afraid of any task that could be imposed on me."—"In truth," said the old man,

after having looked at her for a while with still greater attention, it seems as if Providence had sent you hither at this time with some especial purpose. I am schoolmaster in the village, as you have heard already. My house is that one with the lime-trees before it, which you can see even from this distance. Now, the day before yesterday, we lost a woman-servant, who had attended us faithfully for seventeen years, and my wife has herself become so frail and old, that such an event made her quite inconsolable. This morning, just in the nick of time, we are provided with another, the best, as I think, that we could have found in the world—so, in God's name, let us make a trial together, and if there should be faults on either side, I trust, after all, we shall not quarrel."

To Alice, these words sounded, indeed, like a direct interposition of Providence, for now she could not say that she was utterly forsaken; she had at least found one individual who received her with friendly kindness and sympathy. So she rose up, and, as fast as her extreme weariness would allow, followed the old man to his house. His wife, indeed, on their arrival, made

some objections as to the youth and extraordinary beauty of the girl, but the schoolmaster contrived to evade all those scruples, and, in a very short time, Alice proved, by her conduct, that their benevolence was not thrown away on one unworthy of protection. Never, before, had they known any servant so patient, so industrious, and so faithful. As far as it was possible, she took from the old woman all the cares of the household, read every wish even by the expression of her eyes, and by her punctual obedience and scrupulous good order, became almost like a guardian angel in the house that had so hospitably received her. In a few months, therefore, her situation was completely altered. Instead of being looked on as a servant, she was rather treated like a beloved daughter, and she, on her part, began to respect the good old couple, as if they had been her own father and mother.

Fortunate as her situation proved with these worthy people, she was yet wholly unable to conquer her own deep sorrow, and that longing which she always felt after the objects of her affection that were so far remote. In the si-

lence and solitude of night she wept unobserved; and prayed unceasingly, that God, in his infinite mercy, would compassionate her sufferings, and point out some way by which she might retrace her steps to Switzerland. Evermore the thoughts irresistibly recurred of Rudolf's terror and affliction, of the suspicions that he and all the inhabitants of the canton would entertain on account of her disappearance—of the black designs that Gertrude, perhaps even now, continued to cherish, and the cruel fate that might hang over her forsaken child. Those tormenting reflections were all sharpened by her own self-reproaches, and only the omnipotent arm of Providence upheld the poor trembling exile, enabling her still to place her confidence in that power who chastises where he loves, and who will not suffer the already bruised reed to be crushed.

Thus passed over two long melancholy years, and all the inquiries she had set on foot, or letters that she had dispatched, remained unanswered and in vain. No way seemed left to her of obtaining news from Switzerland, and still less was there any possibility, without money or credit, of returning thither. But at the end of this

time, after severe illness, Alice's old mistress died, and was followed soon by the disconsolate widower, who was not able to remain in the world without that faithful companion, to whose presence he had been so long accustomed. Alice had continued to serve them with the utmost attention to their last moments, and had closed their eyes in death, so that she now found they had left her enough, besides her stipulated wages, to enable her to make the long wished-for journey to her native land. Hope, to which she had been so long a stranger, once more dawned in her mind; and the mere possibility of again beholding Rudolf, was an impression so delightful, that she thought of nothing else, and did not lose a day in putting her plans into execution. She obtained proper information as to the route that she must pursue, and, in short, after some laborious weeks travelling, sometimes with the mail-waggon, sometimes on foot in company with good people to whom she had been recommended, she at length beheld the snow clad tops of the Alps once more rise at a far distance on her view; and the thought, "Yonder lives thy husband and child, and thou wilt soon behold them

again," was so overpowering, that she burst into tears and almost fainted, so that her travelling associate, an old citizen's wife, had much trouble in again restoring her to any degree of composure.

She had determined to make out the remainder of the way, from this last station to her birthplace, quite alone, and on foot. For, in truth, she knew not what changes might have taken place, or what people would now think of her, and she would gladly, at first, have remained unknown as a stranger. These doubts and fears increased as she drew near her journey's end, so that she could not move along with her wonted rapidity. Now, at last, she had past through a rocky narrow ravine, which alone lay between her and the sight of the wide gleaming lake, and her former beloved habitation. With every step, her agitation increased, till behold!—the beautiful expanse of waters—the well known landscape—the wooded cliffs, and smiling village were unrolled, as if by magic, before her!—As yet, she could not, on account of the sheltering woods, discern her own house, but the smoke of the chimnies was rising over the trees, marking the place

where Rudolf and her child now lived, if indeed they yet survived. Once more, quite overpowered, she threw herself weeping on the ground, and prayed long and fervently for support in the trials that perhaps awaited her. Feeling her strength quite exhausted, she determined to make inquiries, and to beg some refreshment at the nearest house that had a promising appearance, and luckily observed one, where there was seated, with her spinning-wheel at the door, a good-humoured old woman, surrounded by a little party of children, who looked kindly at the handsome stranger, remarking, no doubt, both her unusual dress, and the traces of care and anxiety which were so visible on her countenance. A jar of milk and some brown bread were immediately brought out, and Alice was requested to sit down on the stone bench with her hostess, where the varied objects in the beautiful landscape soon afforded a commencement for their conversation. On inquiring who lived at the farm, whence the smoke was rising over the woods, and hearing Rudolf's name, Alice ventured to ask many questions regarding him, pretending that she had known that handsome young Swiss, when he was

a cavalry soldier in the Pappenheim cuirassiers. She, herself, was born in the neighbourhood of Prague, and now came in search of some friends of her late husband's who lived at St Gilgen. The old woman kindly answered all her queries, and especially as to Rudolf said, that he was living in his usual way, with his wife and two children.

" His wife," exclaimed Alice, turning deadly pale, " He has then married again ?" " Not that I know of," said the old woman, " unless he had a wife before when he was abroad in the wars. Soldiers indeed are not very scrupulous about such matters ?" " And to whom then is he now married ?" said Alice. " She was a girl of this neighbourhood," answered the woman—" and they have now been man and wife several years." " Two years perhaps ?" faltered Alice. " Oh longer than that," replied the other—" their youngest child runs about and speaks by this time." Alice was petrified with astonishment. She knew not what to conclude from such assertions ; and her hostess, thinking that perhaps Rudolf had formed some connection with this handsome young girl when he was in foreign states, look-

ed with increasing interest on the poor sufferer.—She, therefore, in her turn, proposed many questions, of which Alice, in her confusion, scarcely observed the proper drift; but when she had in some degree recovered, begged to know whether Rudolf now lived happily with his wife? "On the contrary," answered the old woman, "people talk of them all over the country,—she is said to be so ill-natured and whimsical, that the good young man's life will end in absolute martyrdom." A strange feeling of blending triumph and compassion gave Alice new strength; but through the rest of the conversation, all that she heard only served to perplex her the more, though she had, alas! learned enough to crush every lingering hope that might have remained of future happiness. Before taking leave, it occurred to her that she ought to ask some questions about Gertrude, the wife, as she said, of a very rich hammermeister. "How is this?" said the old woman, "you seem to be well acquainted in our country?"—"My husband was often in Switzerland with his relations," answered Alice, "and from him I used to hear of the inhabitants in your neighbourhood. Tell me then, how is the

rich flaunting wife of the wealthy ironsmith?" "Lack-a-day," replied the other, "it must have been a great while since you heard of her, for she has been long since dead."

"Dead?" exclaimed Alice with horror, "how or where did she die?"—"As to this Gertrude of whom you speak," answered her hostess, "she was always a very strange young woman,—and people said, that she was devoted to those terrible arts for which we faithful Christians know not even a name. But you understand me,—one would not speak willingly of such matters, and besides, nothing was ever proved against her, so that it would be very wrong to decide absolutely against one's neighbour. It is enough to tell you, that, for several years, she was in the habit of going into the lake to bathe. It was said that she did this to preserve her beauty, and that the water was before-hand enchanted by the many spells and exorcisms that she pronounced over it. So it happened about two years ago, as people said, that she went out before sunrise, as was her wont, and the servant maid was to wait for her at some distance in the woods. But then we are told that she never appeared again,—the ser-

vant became alarmed and ran to look for her mistress, but she was absolutely gone,—her clothes were lying on the shore, but she herself could nowhere be discovered. Whether she was naturally drowned in the lake, or the evil one, God protect us! had overpowered her in the midst of these incantations, it is impossible to prove! The hammermeister made every possible search for her body, but in vain? It is not unlikely,—for the lake has deep unexpected places,—that the unhappy woman had fallen into one of these, and been drawn down by a whirlpool. Other conjectures have also their foundation—but, in short, she has never since that day been seen among us."

Alice shuddered in silence. She thought that, in this dreadful fate of Gertrude, she could read the just interposition of avenging Providence; and when she had recovered some appearance of composure, and thanked the old woman for her courtesy, she proceeded on her last painful stage to that home, at which she had hoped to find perfect happiness, but where she must now appear in disguise, and perhaps could remain but a few moments before leaving it for ever. Still, however, she must once more behold her husband and her

child, though it were for the last time in this world. The way was yet long, her strength was exhausted, and she walked slowly and laboriously. At length, she saw her own beloved dwelling-place; she had turned the corner of the thicket—the rivulet on whose banks she had so often sat with Rudolf saluted her with its accustomed murmur,—the farm-yard, the garden and trees were all as she had left them; and on drawing near to the door, she heard from within the plaintive accents of a child's voice,—perhaps her own child! On entering the court, she observed there a female figure employed on some household-work at the fountain, but she was bending down over her labour, and Alice could not see her features; so she glided onwards to the half open door, looked in, and, good Heaven, there sat Rudolf, her own dear husband,—but, leaning his head thoughtfully on his hand, looking very pale and disconsolate. All reflection and caution forsook her at this sight, and, with a loud exclamation of blended sorrow and delight, she flew into his arms. But Rudolf angrily forced himself from her embrace. "What means all this?" said he; "why these foolish pretences? and why have you

drest yourself out so absurdly ?" Alice felt as if she had been struck by a thunderbolt. This reception, at once so cold, and yet so natural, as if he perfectly well knew to whom he was addressing himself, confounded her more than aught that she had yet encountered, so that she could do nothing but wring her hands, and look up to him imploringly. Her husband, however, took no other notice of her than by exclaiming " Pshaw ! let us have no more of this mummery !"—and turned away in wrath towards the window. " Alas ! Rudolf," said she, " have you no better words for me than these, after two long years of such unhappy separation ?" " Two years of separation, forsooth !" answered he, " half an hour ago, you went out to the fountain in the court, and now you come back in a strange dress ? To say the truth Alice, your conduct all this morning has been by no means in keeping with this fine scene, and, in short—but I shall not vex myself more about the matter. Away with you to your task, for here you have no business at this hour." " Oh, Rudolf, Rudolf !" answered Alice, " what monstrous deception must have been practised against you. It is now two long years and three

months since I had the happiness of seeing you! Never since the fatal Wallpurgis' night——" "Darest thou yet speak of that time?" replied he; "aye, from that night, as thou well know'st, thou hast been changed, and I have been a miserable injured husband!" "It was not I—it was not I,"—cried Alice with increasing animation and courage. "No, Rudolf, I have never done ought to vex you, and, moreover, I was far far from hence.—Alas! have you then quite forgotten your once dear Alice?" With these words she stretched out her arms towards him. The tears that now flowed from her eyes,—her tone of voice and whole expression of countenance, moved him to the very heart.—"Good God!" cried he, "it seems at this moment as if old times were indeed revived,—Alice, is it possible!—and do you indeed still love me?"

At that moment the door opened, and behold her second self,—another Alice, in person the same, only different in dress, stepped into the room. "The saints defend us!" cried Rudolf, "Have I then two wives?" But Alice, who had cherished her own suspicions, shrieked aloud,—ran to a large tub of water that stood in the door-

way, and, having made the sign of the cross, sprinkled some drops on the mysterious apparition; whereupon the latter, who had seemed mutually terrified, started aside—rushed with a horrid scream out at the door, and in her flight, both Rudolf and Alice thought they recognised the form and features of Gertrude.

She had vanished. The husband and wife looked at each other trembling and astonished. Yet, in Alice's heart, that had been so long wounded and depressed, tranquillity was soon renewed, and Rudolf too began to understand the vile illusions by which his life had been rendered so wretched. With rapture he flew to embrace his beloved wife. "Can it then be true?" said he; "am I so blest as once more to fold in my arms my own good, faithful, and beautiful Alice?"—She was now weeping for joy, so that she could not answer—and Rudolf too was quite overpowered by his conflicting emotions. At length was revealed, to his astonishment and horror, the whole story of Alice's unfortunate intercourse with Gertrude,—her violent abduction at midnight,—the witches' dance on the Blocksberg, and her abode in the schoolmaster's house.

Every word that she uttered served more and more to convince him that there never had been in his wife's character even the least shade of change, and that the passionate wayward being who had embittered his life for many years, had only been some malicious and disguised evil spirit. Then, too, he began his narrative; how, two years ago, he had come home after that frightful Wall-purgis' night,—found his wife engaged in her household occupations, and his house in the best order,—so that no suspicion could possibly have arisen in his mind. Soon after, however, the supposed Alice's character seemed completely changed. In place of her wonted mildness and humility, there was evident a haughty impatience, which would not bear with the least contradiction, nor allow to any one in the house the slightest indulgence. From day-break to night-fall the scolding and quarrelling were incessant. Even her affection for him, though more vehement than ever, had yet assumed a new character, by which he was exceedingly disconcerted; nor would it ever have been in his power to clear up these mysteries, had not the talkative propensities of an old woman-servant led her to disclose that her mistress

had gone out secretly on Wallpurgis' night with the wife of the rich hammermeister, and that she did not return till next morning, then gliding in at the back-door of the garden, and stealing quietly into her chamber. "From that hour," added the old woman, "her temper has been so much changed that I have never been able, for one day, to satisfy her by my services." Rudolf was horror-struck by the suspicions which now crowded on his mind; and when he sat gazing on those features, that reminded him of happy days, now for ever past, his conflicts were almost insupportable. At length he came to the resolution of calling her to account regarding her excursion on Wallpurgis' night; and the manner in which she answered his inquiries, proved but too plainly that his suspicions had been well founded. After that conversation, all appearance of love and attachment between this most unhappy couple had quite vanished. Alice seemed to live for no other purpose but to torment her husband, and if there were any sign of returning affection, it was expressed only by the most furious jealousy. Her conduct towards the children was equally unaccountable and capricious. The elder, though

amiable and engaging, she always hated and persecuted ;—the younger, who——

" You have another child, then," cried Alice, when Rudolf came to this part of his narrative. " Yes,—I knew it!" A feeling of strange perplexity came over her, and she looked wildly through the room. " Yonder it lies in the cradle," said her husband, and Alice ran to it ; but the cradle was empty, for the child had vanished unnoticed by them at the same moment with its mother. More than ever astonished, they gazed silently on each other, but now the elder boy, holding by his nurse's hand, came into the room. Alice rushed forward, and clasped her own dear child in her arms with rapture, and with gratitude to Heaven for that infinite mercy which had thus restored to her all she held dear in this world.

For the future, Rudolf's worldly fortune became more prosperous than it had ever been. The sufferings of their past years afforded them an inexhaustible subject for conversation and pious reflections. It should be told also, that a few days after Alice returned, some fishermen found the long-sought-for remains of the Ham-

mermeister's wife in the lake, and brought them to her husband. Report said, that they were much astonished to perceive, that the body, after an interval of more than two years, seemed as fresh and unchanged, as if the accident of her death had happened only yesterday. The widower, according to use and wont, made a magnificent funeral, and it was said, that he was rather rejoiced to find, by this unquestionable proof, that she was really dead, and could never return to his house again.

OATH AND CONSCIENCE.

OATH AND CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.

It was during that eventful period when the murder of D'Enghien, the execution of Palm, and many other violent outrages of the French tyrant had filled all Germany with terror and apprehension, that the young Baron, Ernest von Sonnenberg, returned to the castle of his ancestors, which he had left when a boy of ten years old, and from whence he had for the last eleven years been an exile.

Indeed he still looked with a feeling of horror on the place of his nativity, from the recollection of a dreadful event that had happened there; for one night his father had been found murdered in the neighbouring forest. The impression

of that terrific incident was never effaced from the young Baron's mind. Still, as often as he thought of those dark woods by which the domain was environed, he beheld, in imagination, the bleeding spectral form of his beloved parent, and still heard the piercing shrieks of his distracted mother, who afterwards could not bear to remain at the family mansion, but left it along with himself and another son, who was then a boy two years old. The Baroness never recovered from that terrible shock, but died within a short period, and, henceforth, the two brothers had been educated by their guardian in the capital. Within the last two months, however, the town had fallen under the power of the French, and in a short time longer, all the Baron's countrymen saw themselves forced into an alliance with Bonaparte. In his opinion, the people ought rather to have been cut to pieces than submit to such a yoke; but his vote was one against a thousand, and he perceived, that if he remained in the capital, he was now at an age when he could not by any means be passed over, but would fall under the necessity of drawing his sword in the cause of those whom he would gladly have fought

against. He, therefore, took advantage of a slight illness by which he was opportunely attacked, and requested permission to visit his paternal inheritance, where he hoped, for some interval at least, to live retired and unmolested.

It was in the autumn when he arrived, for the first time, as proprietor on the baronial estate, where he found the scenery much pleasanter and more picturesque than he had expected. The romantic mountains, the many-coloured woods, and harvest-fields full of reapers, were, indeed, very attractive; nor was the castle old nor gloomy, but in a modern style of architecture. He soon felt quite at home in this residence, and amused himself every day in making excursions through the neighbouring villages and hamlets on his extensive lands, which had hitherto, from their remote situation, escaped the devastations of war. Thus he lived for some weeks in great tranquillity, with but few servants—without luxury or expence, and without any equipage,—as he did not wish to attract the attention of neighbouring proprietors, but rather, if possible, to be quite incognito.

One evening, when he had enjoyed a longer

ride than usual, and was on his return, darkness overtook him in the forest, when he was yet at a considerable distance from home. It was a grim stormy night in October. The wind blew vehemently through the trees, not only rending away the leaves, but even breaking the withered branches with a noise that often made him start and shudder. Involuntarily, though he wished always to avoid such gloomy thoughts, his mind reverted to the past, and more vividly than ever he seemed to behold the spectral form of his murdered father. Every moment the idea forced itself upon him, that even then his horse trod the blood-stained ground on which the horrid deed had been committed. "Well," said he, not being able to conquer such impressions, "it were better, doubtless, if, by this means, some discovery could be made!" for, up to the present day, no trace had been found of the murderers, and every endeavour to fix even on the slightest evidence had been in vain. It was not yet proved whether the unfortunate man had money along with him, or if he had been assassinated merely for the sake of private malice and revenge.

Several years afterwards, some articles of value, which he usually carried on his person, were found in the shops of a certain large town; but there should have been others of more consequence that had never come to light. No suspicion could be attached to any inhabitant of the forest, and, at length, the whole affair seemed forgotten and obliterated, except in the recollection of the young Baron, whose painful emotions were now more than ever excited by the gloomy scenes around him. At such a time, too, it could not be interpreted as cowardice, if some apprehensions for his own safety mingled with his other reflections.

The darkness always increased, and with it the noise of the wind among the trees. He knew not any longer in what direction he was proceeding, and, at last, threw the rein carelessly on his horse's neck, and let the animal have his own way. This did not succeed, however, for, all at once, the horse stood still; the path had been quite lost, and around him was nothing but a thick covert of brush-wood. The Baron dismounted, to try whether he could find any outlet, but, after groping about for some time in

vain, suddenly a clear flickering light shone right before him, which, of course, he resolved to take for his guide. In a little while, looking over the fence of brush-wood, he perceived that this light came from a torch of pine-tree, and the gleam fell on the broad cart-road that he had so long been searching for. He saw also that it proceeded from the door of a building, which seemed more like a ruinous barn than a dwelling-house. At length a miserable-looking old woman made her appearance; the light of the torch which she carried gave a ghastly expression to her sharp forbidding features, shaded by her black bristly hair, which protruded from a red night-cap. Altogether, she was a most suspicious-looking personage.

This old woman now stept slowly across the road towards a dwelling-house opposite, of which the entrance was obstructed by heaps of sand and fir-tree branches. She was followed in a few moments by two young men, of whom the foremost, in a ragged dress, and with a pale, haggard, yet fierce visage, presented a figure that might have inspired terror in any beholder. These two were carrying the body of a man in a

blanket, and the arms hanging down stiff and motionless, proved that it was a corpse. The woman held up the light to show them the way, and, by degrees, they all three disappeared silently into the cottage, closing the door, and leaving the scene tenfold more gloomy and frightful than before; only from the narrow dust-covered panes of the window came a feeble glimmer, sufficient to guide the Baron in his progress out of the thicket.

He made his horse leap over the hedge, and arrived on the road; but the place was still quite unknown to him, nor could he determine whether he should go forward or recede, in order to reach the castle. His former apprehensions added to the alarming scene which he had just witnessed, rendered him exceedingly averse to ask any questions at the cottage, yet there seemed no other way of obtaining the requisite information. While he stood thus hesitating, it occurred to him that he was not without the means of self-defence; he felt ashamed of his fears; and recollecting that the countenance of the younger peasant had been very melancholy, but was by no means stern or repulsive, he thought, after

all, that the people might be quite blameless, and, leading his horse by the bridle, he cautiously approached the door.

Coming close up, he found that several panes of glass had been broken in the window, and their place supplied with paper, which was full of holes, and through one of these he could observe all that passed within. In the middle of the room, on the floor, he discerned an object, seemingly a dead body, about which the three persons were employed as if preparing it to be laid in the coffin. However, he had no time for accurate investigation, for the old woman looking up, caught sight of his face at the window, and was so terrified, that she uttered a long shrilling scream, and fell fainting on the floor. Both the men seemed astonished at her conduct, and hastened to raise her up. The baron was also shocked, not being able to assign any sufficient reason for such affright, and withdrew from the window again, hesitating what he should do. Some minutes afterwards the cottage door opened, and its three inhabitants rushed out. "For Heaven's sake mother," said a timid voice, "what is the matter, and what would you do?" "I must have air—air!" screamed the

woman. " No—here is nothing," added she looking round. " Have you not seen it then ?—Oh those eyes—those eyes !"

" Ha—ha—ha ! I thought so," exclaimed a rough male voice. " Can you never accustom yourself to see a dead man with his eyes open ? Wherefore, then, did you not press his eyelids down just after he died ?" " Aye—aye," muttered the old woman more composedly—if *that* had been all, it were well. Be it so, then ; —I shall say no more."—" But you are trembling in every limb mother," said the voice, " hold by me, and I shall lead you to bed."—"Let me alone," cried she angrily ; " I shall not go in yet. Bring a fir-tree brand, Hans George, and light me over to the barn. There is a drop of kümmel left in the flask,—*that* will strengthen me, and Felix, look, here are two copper coins ; press down his eyelids, and lay these upon them—but don't forget to take them off again before he is buried, for afterwards they bring money into empty pockets. Give one to your brother, and keep the other yourself."—" How ?" answered the youth, " you would leave me alone with the dead body ?"—" You are afraid then ?" said the

old woman with a grin. "Kindle a good piece of fir wood, and that will give you light enough. When he was alive, you were his especial favourite, and it were well if he would now speak and entrust you with the secret where his treasures are deposited. But come along Hans George."

Leaning on the ragged youth with the forbidding features, and holding in her left hand the fir torch which he had brought out, the woman again stepped across the road. The younger lad stood gazing wistfully after them, and when they had both vanished into the ruinous building, the Baron, who had meanwhile mounted his horse, rode rapidly forward, with the words "Hollah! good friend, I have lost my way—which is the nearest road to the Baron's castle?" The youth seemed at first rather startled, but, by the faint light that came through the window, recognising the Baron, he took off his cap respectfully, and said, "My Lord, the old bridge is distant about a hundred yards, directly forwards; then you turn to the left hand up hill, and the high-road is plain before you." "Thank you friend," said our hero, "good night;" and without waiting for farther discourse he rode rapidly onwards.

After a few minutes, he found himself at the bridge, which was already well known to him, and he could not help wondering how he had lost his way so completely on his own estate, as he must have passed these cottages more than once by daylight, though they never particularly attracted his attention. In due time he arrived at home, and, laughing at his own groundless apprehensions, described the whole adventure to the steward at supper, though, notwithstanding the air of levity which he assumed, he could not help feeling a certain degree of inquietude, even at the picture which he himself drew of the scenes at the cottage.

"I would lay any bet," said the steward, that it is the silent Felix with whom your lordship has spoken this evening. I have heard that his father is dead, and is to be buried to-morrow." "Who is the silent Felix?" said the baron. "He is a very strange lad," answered the steward, "better educated, and in many respects better behaved than could have been expected, considering his humble station; yet his habits are so eccentric, that sometimes he will scarcely speak for weeks together, or the few

words that he utters are so wild and incomprehensible, that one is tempted almost to hold him for a madman." "Is this all?" said the Baron. "Nay," answered the steward, "he is remarkable for being the handsomest youth in the whole neighbourhood. All the girls are in love with him, and yet he will not notice one of them." "So he is not disposed to fall in love," said the Baron; "no matter, his heart will be wounded one day or another." "Yet, my Lord, this cannot be the reason," replied the steward; "it is evident enough that his heart is neither cold nor insensible; but then his own absurd fancies always come in the way, and if he speaks confidentially with a beautiful girl, he says to her, 'Aye truly, I may render you unhappy—but I can never be your husband.' Besides, his good humour if he ever had any, has of late quite deserted him, and notwithstanding his naturally fine features, he grows every day more and more like a ghost." "Indeed?" said the Baron, "there must be some reason for all this. I should like to speak with this young man." "Nothing can be more easy," said the steward, "and perhaps, by your influence, my Lord, he might b

recovered from this melancholy madness, for, in truth, I have often been sorry for him. He is an excellent forester, and a bold hunter, but now, since his father's death, his stepbrother will have the place of upper woodman, and Felix will, doubtless, find his circumstances at home worse than ever. The father, too, was a gloomy discontented man, but as to his honesty, no one ever had any doubts: the stepmother and her son, however, are by no means to be trusted." "Why should her son have the forester's place then?" said the Baron. "Nay, I should not wish it to be so," answered the steward; "but he is now the oldest in the house, and besides there was a promise made to him by the late honoured Baron." "In that case the matter must rest as it is," replied Ernest von Sonnenberg, as he rose and retired to his chamber.

On the following day, he was reminded of his strange adventure by the village church bell tolling for a funeral. Partly from the interest that had arisen in his mind for Felix, and partly in order to banish those absurd impressions which had made him believe that he was among murderers, he determined to go to the churchyard,

and on his arrival there, conceal himself under the shade of a large elder-tree, while the procession was yet slowly advancing from a distance. Now, however, he almost forgot the design with which he came, in his admiration of the romantic scenery around him. The church was situated on a lonely retired spot, a high cliff overhanging a lake of considerable extent, whose waves beat against the wall of the burial ground. Just on the outermost verge of this eminence, grew the elder-tree under which the baron had taken his station, whence he commanded the most delightful prospect across the water, now resting before him smooth as a mirror, surrounded by the many-coloured woods, stubble-fields, hamlets, and distant mountains. The delighted spectator, contemplating this fine scenery, forgot that the lake waves had always encroached more and more on the land;—the elder tree, indeed, hung over the water, and whoever stood there was in a situation that looked very dangerous, if it were not really so. The baron was quite lost in his own meditations, so that he never noticed the newly made grave, which was on the other side of the tree, quite on the edge of the precipice,

and the procession came up close to him before he knew that it had arrived in the church-yard. The coffin was lowered, and the grave rapidly filled up. Among the humble assemblage of mourners, it was easy to distinguish the two brothers, who were now both well dressed in black; the elder seemed wholly indifferent to what was passing, and his visage seemed more repulsive than ever. He retired very soon, talking, and even laughing with some of the young men, while Felix at last was left quite alone, gazing wistfully on the grave.

The mysterious thoughts of the former night again awoke in the Baron's mind, when he saw the youth standing there so pale, ghostly, and mournful. His feelings impelled him to raise this unfortunate orphan from the unhappy circumstances in which he was now involved. He therefore stepped slowly forward from his place of concealment. "So, young man," said he, "it was your father who has just now been interred here?"—"Alas! my Lord Baron, it is even so!" replied the youth, looking up quickly, and with his eyes full of tears.—"Well—but you should not despond—you are a clever active lad—and

he is now at rest."—" If I were sure of that!" said Felix. The Baron started. " How!" said he; " dost thou not think that he will rest in his grave?"—" Alas?—I should have so gladly spoken with him once more," said the youth, ".and asked him some questions.—It should not have happened thus," added he, knitting his brows, and then looking up to Heaven,—" he was too soon taken away with all his sins on his head."—" How, then, did he die?" said the Baron. " Suddenly," answered Felix; " it is said by the bursting of a blood-vessel."—" Well —such deaths happen often."—" No, my Lord," answered Felix, " not often. We pray, at least, that God will protect us from a sudden death."—" But thou shalt not think more of this melancholy event," said the Baron; " I shall enable you to forget it. Your father's place is now entrusted to your half-brother;—you would, perhaps, rather not live in his house for the future;—let me provide for you therefore;—you shall be my *chasseur*,—for I have need of one at this time." Felix seemed unaccountably agitated,—he started back, turned pale, and stared at the Baron. " How!—you are afraid, then?" said

the latter; "or you are not willing to be my servant?"—"Oh, Heaven!" cried Felix, clasping his hands in extreme emotion,—"I would gladly be your servant—your slave—your defender even to death!"—"Well," replied the Baron,—struck by his ardour, "if you are content and happy with my proposal, then get the better of your grief, and accept as a blessing that offer which has been made to you at your father's grave."

The Baron retired, and Felix threw himself, sobbing aloud, on the turf, and remained there, till the men who had charge of the burial-ground drew near and found him almost insensible. They raised him up;—he soon regained his self-possession, and, on the same day, went gladly and cheerfully to his new station in the castle, though, as the Baron afterwards learned, his step-mother and stepbrother had, for the first time in their lives, flattered and caressed him, wishing that he could be prevailed on to stay in their cottage. The brother pretended that he could not conduct the business assigned to him as forester, without the assistance of Felix;—that the latter had been placed under his power as a

guardian; and when these objections were set aside, offered even to pay for his brother's services in ready money. The mother joined in these endeavours, at the same time refusing obstinately to give up the small property of which Felix was possessed out of her own hands. The youth, however, did not allow himself to be deluded in this manner, and the Baron's positive order soon brought all things into a proper train.

From this moment onwards, Felix's character seemed completely changed. Faithful and persevering in his duties as a servant—cheerful and social in his disposition—he was soon a favourite with every one in the castle. Not only his handsome person, as before, but the favour shown him, and promises of future advancement made by the Baron, attracted the attention of many fine girls. Felix behaved to them all very kindly; laughed, danced, and talked with them; but was by no means to be led into any serious courtship or engagements. Only one of these beauties—the steward's daughter—seemed to interest him so much, that, in all probability, a declaration of love would have been the consequence, had not the difference in their stations been so formidable.

All at once, however, Felix absolutely renounced her society, and would not see her, or speak with her any more. His former melancholy and reserve seemed also to have returned with double force, so that, when he came to attend his master in the morning, his eyes were often red and swollen, as if he had wept through the whole night. Even before now, the Baron had, at intervals, seen with regret, that the youth's disposition to solitude and gloomy reflection was not wholly overcome; and he had learned, among other strange circumstances, that the chasseur had never once visited his brother's cottage since his appointment at the castle. It was obvious, therefore, that he continued on bad terms with his relations, and that some painful mystery weighed on his spirits. On this point his master and the steward often spoke together; but, through his unaffected attachment and regular attendance, he became every day in their estimation more trust-worthy.

Attended by his favourite chasseur, the Baron, as before, devoted entire days to excursions in the forest. Frequently they were engaged in boar-hunts, partridge and hare-shooting; at other times, made visits to the different farms and hamlets, so

that, by degrees, a kind of familiar confidence arose between them. The Baron found, indeed, that the youth was without much education or acquired knowledge; but, on this account, he was the more struck with his natural clearness of understanding, strengthened, as it seemed, by a very deep and extraordinary sense of religion. During their long rides and walks, the Baron had frequently spoken of the strange manner in which his attention had first been directed to Felix. The murder of the late Baron, too, was frequently a subject of their discourse. "I would give much, —indeed even half my fortune," said Ernest von Sonnenberg, one night when they were returning through the forest, "if I could but discover the real circumstances of that murder; then, methinks, my mind would be at rest."—"Indeed, my Lord," answered Felix, "and is your mind now disturbed?"—"In this place irresistibly," said the Baron; "all appears to me so mysterious and uncertain. I believe the truth, were it ever so melancholy, would put an end to the feelings by which I am now tormented. I cannot help being tossed from one conjecture to another. Oftentimes, too, I think perhaps fate has decreed that, ere

long, I should, like my father, be assassinated in this forest. How? You start at these words?"—"Yes, my Lord," answered the youth; "I cannot bear to reflect on that horrible event. Perhaps, if the late honoured baron had possessed a faithful chasseur he might have been alive now!"—"Can you recollect having seen my father?"—"Yes; tolerably well. About the time of his death, I was a boy of eight years old; and still I can vividly recal his person to my remembrance. He did not live to become old; and you, my Lord, are now very like to what he then was. But never indulge fears for your own safety, whilst I live to attend you."—"You will, then, always stay with me?"—"For ever,—if you will only permit me."—"Nay, Felix; Heaven only knows whither my duties may yet call me. But I shall not fail to reward your fidelity. Some appointment, with an income,—a handsome wife—the steward's daughter for example—ha, Felix, is it not so? In that case, you would allow your master to go alone into the world?"—"No; I shall certainly never marry: and if you, my lord, are to join the army, I shall not remain here."—"But, you are attached to that girl, Felix; don't be afraid that I

shall neglect to give your bride a handsome dowry."—"*My* bride, my Lord!" answered Felix, in a voice suddenly become low and faltering; "Alas, I am already betrothed, and never can regain my liberty!"—"How? You have a bride, and are yet so young? You have a child too, perhaps?"—"No; thank Heaven I shall never have any children."—"Wherefore?"—"Because, my Lord, they would be born only to misery."—"What foolish fancies! Are you not, then, satisfied with your lot, and happy in this world?"—"Satisfied! Oh yes. Sometimes I believe I must be so; but, free-minded and happy,—there is a wide difference!"—"Explain to me the cause of this discontent."—"Oh, Heavens, my Lord, that were impossible. It is the direful mystery of my life, which I dare not disclose. Do not ask me, then; for such thoughts drive me to despair, and I have no power of returning an answer."—Thus ended their dialogue; and the Baron did not like to urge his questions any farther, for it seemed as if there were certain chords in the youth's mind, which, when once struck, only vibrated with the most fearful and harassing discord. Once, after another dialogue of the same kind, he sank into

a mood of deep and silent thought, from which he seemed with great difficulty to rouse himself.—"What are you thinking of, Felix," said the Baron, "that you are become so frightfully silent and gloomy?"—"My Lord," said Felix, as if waking from a dream, "I was thinking of a very black crime."—"Art thou mad?" said the Baron.—"Why dost thou stare so wildly on vacancy? Hark thee, Felix, hast thou any designs against me?"—"Herr Baron, do I look like a murderer?" said the youth, becoming deadly pale. "Believe my *words*, then, for my *looks* are deceitful. I would not commit murder, indeed, even if you commanded me to do so; but I would die for you gladly. But, pray," added he, "do not ask me more questions. I must be left alone and unaided in my sorrow and mystery."

CHAPTER II.

MEANWHILE the winter had passed away, and, according to all accounts that had arrived, the state of public affairs was worse than ever. The power of the French conqueror was always increasing. It happened even, that several troops of his cavalry appeared near the Baron's domains, and there seemed no doubt that they would, ere long, ride up to his peaceful mansion. People began to speak of conscriptions—even of a *levé en masse*, that was to spare neither rank, age, nor condition; and, it was quite certain, that a young man like the Baron would not be allowed to remain in repose, without being proscribed as an enemy by the present unhappy government—nay, from the sentiments that he had before expressed, he ran a risk of being violently arrested. It was observed, also, by those around him, that he received many letters, and was often much disquiet-

ed, though he made no complaints or disclosures to any one, but carried on his usual course of life, spending whole days in his excursions through the now verdant forests, and seeming determined to remain at his castle, though it was announced to him that a French corps had arrived quite close in his neighbourhood.

One day when the Baron had rode out early with his chasseur, the latter came back towards evening alone. On being questioned, he said, that the Baron had ordered him to ride on before, and would soon follow. It grew very late, however; the Baron did not arrive, and through the whole succeeding night was looked for in vain. The steward became much alarmed; he summoned Felix, (who seemed also, like the other servants, much distressed at his master's absence)—and questioned him what extraordinary occurrence had led to his being sent on before? Felix answered without the slightest hesitation, that his master had gone, attended by him, into the cottage of a charcoal-burner, who was well known at the castle—that the Baron had there asked for some refreshment,—and in the presence of this man and his family, ordered Felix to proceed with-

out him to the castle, as he had a visit to pay in the neighbourhood, and, contrary to his usual custom, wished to be left alone. The steward resolved immediately to make inquiries of the charcoal-merchant, from whom, however, he discovered little more than Felix had already declared ;— only the statement of a young woodman who belonged to the same family, perplexed him exceedingly. This person said, that, about an hour after the chasseur had been ordered to return alone, he had seen him with his master in the forest— at least, he thought so ; but they were at such a distance as not to be very clearly discernible. Besides, the Baron had come to the charcoal man's hut when it was only mid-day.

On the following evening, the steward was surprised by an occurrence, which opened up at once a new train of suspicions. He was on the point of retiring to rest, when the gate leading into the castle-court was violently thrown open, and a troop of French cavalry galloped in. They dismounted and ran up stairs in great haste, demanding that the owner of the castle should instantly make his appearance, as they had important and confidential dispatches to deliver. In vain did the

steward declare that his master was not at home, but on a visit in the neighbourhood—*where* it was impossible to say;—but the Frenchmen threatened to take him away prisoner, unless he afforded the most exact information, for they did not hesitate to denounce Ernest von Sonnenberg as a skulking traitor. The captain swore that he would not quit the place, till the Baron was given up to him. The terrified steward, indeed, sent servants in all directions, but they came back without having found the slightest trace of their absent master. A thought occurred to him, therefore, that the Baron had received secret intimation of what was to happen—that he had concealed himself by stratagem,—and that Felix had been sent from the charcoal-man's hut, only that he might prove by witnesses that he did not know where his master now was. That he might spare the faithful chasseur the risk of being exposed to needless persecution and suspicions, he advised that he should remove from the castle, and wait in the retirement of his brother's cottage, till these unwelcome guests had taken their departure. Felix by no means seemed to like the idea of returning to his late father's house, but he found the steward's suggestion so

prudent, that he said nothing, but agreed to the proposal.

His residence there was longer, however, than he expected; for it seemed as if the French cavalry had determined never to leave Sonnenberg. Their captain raved and raged. He insisted that its proprietor knew well what was to happen, and had retired at this time from a self-consciousness of guilt. On this ground, he maintained that he had a right to keep the castle, as if it had been won from an enemy, until such time as farther orders arrived from his general; nay, that he might look upon himself as master there, till the runaway Baron should appear to maintain his own station. In vain did the steward suggest, that if some misfortune (which seemed but too probable) had overtaken the Baron, the law of the land must then fix the property on his younger brother. He protested against the conclusion, that a man, whose character was unimpeached and blameless, could have run away, at least till such time as it was proved that no accident had overtaken him, and that he had not, like his father, fallen into the hands of assassins. Although he did not, in reality, entertain the latter supposition, yet, in

order to satisfy the demands of the French officer, he began a most diligent search in the forest ;— but how much was he astonished, when the labourers that he had sent out actually returned, after some days, with a pistol and a bloody handkerchief which they had found in the wood ! He could not help acknowledging that both, according to his recollection and judgment, had belonged to the Baron, He announced it immediately to the French officer, but the latter did not scruple to affirm, that this was an invention of the servants, so that there appeared an absolute necessity for tracing out minutely the whole evidences of this recent discovery. The steward's inquiries for this purpose naturally brought about his meeting again with Felix, who, by an event of a very different kind, had just now drawn the attention of the whole village towards himself.

After some bright sunny days of spring, it seemed as if the winter had all at once returned. Tremendous torrents of rain, accompanied by storms like those of autumn, had interrupted the labours begun in the fields and gardens ;— the rivers poured down raging from the mountains, and the lake was swollen to an unusual ex-

tent. The most ruinous losses were apprehended from its overflow; and the inhabitants of small cottages on the shore looked up anxiously to the churchyard, whose high situation afforded that protection to the dead, which was now denied to the living. At length, towards day-break, after a tempestuous night, it was found that a large portion of the projecting cliff had been torn away, and carried with it the spreading elder-tree, and the grave of Felix's father, so that the villagers collected at an early hour round the place, with looks of terror and astonishment.

Felix was among them, but stood pale and motionless as a statue, with his arms folded, and gazing on the troubled water. The waves were now rather less stormy; the sun for the first time since many days broke through the clouds; and the birds that had been terrified to utter a single note, again ventured to greet each other in the melodious language of spring. Felix was the first to discover a dead body that had been driven to some distance in the water, and was now floating in its shroud on the surface. At this sight, life and animation returned to him. There was a boat within reach that was used by

fishermen. Instantly he ran and loosened the ropes with almost furious haste, and rowed himself towards the corpse, which he drew out of the water. The spectators could not hear what he said, though they saw his lips move—but from his gestures—his clasped hands, and eyes uplifted to Heaven, they concluded that he had found the remains of his father. He let the oars rest, and seemed doubtful whether he should steer to shore. At last he took a sudden determination—rowed back with great vehemence, and without noticing the bystanders, not one of whom offered to assist him, he took the horrible load of the corpse in his arms, and never halted till he had reached the habitation of his stepmother and brother, who refused him admittance. With contempt and indignation he turned from them,—broke open the door of the barn opposite, and deposited the body there. Next he went to the joiner, and ordered him to make a very strong oaken coffin; —he then betook himself to the clergyman of the village, to whom he described the whole occurrence. He spoke in a manner very strange and mysterious, as if he were afraid that the priest would refuse to admit the corpse into consecrated

ground, from which it had been thus separated, and his looks proved how much he was relieved when the good old man came forward to meet him, and agreed at once to his request that a new grave should be prepared. A day was appointed for this second interment, and Felix left him consoled and tranquil. On the following morning it was made known, that the chasseur had, on this occasion, quarrelled violently with his brother;—he had suggested, that this funeral should be celebrated with more solemnity than the former, offering himself, in part, to defray the expence. The mother and brother, however, were of opinion, that they would employ the money he had earned to much better account, insisting that it should be given to them; but as to the body, they thought it should be buried as quietly as possible.

The clergyman joined with them on this point, and sent for Felix to advise him. "I hear, friend," said he, "that you are about to incu much useless expence."—"By no means, you reverence," answered the youth; "my fathe should have a Christian burial."—"But tha ceremony has already been gone through, an

here is no need for any more." Felix started, nd a flush came over his pale features. "Nay, lease your reverence," said he; "this is not nough; for the people already murmur, and hispers are carried about that he was a vile cri- inal, whom the consecrated earth would not hold n its bosom, otherwise his remains would not ave been thrown out in this manner."—"I have eard no such discourse, my son," replied the riest. "Nor have I heard it," said the youth. I would not advise any one to speak in such anner when I am present. I know, however, hat they think so, and that such calumnies are pread; therefore I must beseech your reverence hat my father may be buried once more with very Christian rite."—"Nay, my son, this is ontrary to all established custom. I never per- orm these duties more than once for the same per- on."—"How, then!" exclaimed Felix. "You ill absolutely refuse this request?"—"The rayers that are once read over him," said the riest, "never lose their influence. Have you ver heard, friend, of a second baptism, or second narriage? It is the same with the service over he dead."—"Must, then, the devil for ever-

more hold him in his fiery talons?" exclaimed Felix wildly. "No, reverend Sir, the arch fiend must be exorcised—the weal of my father's soul is placed by Providence in my charge."—"But let me direct your ideas—my dear son you do not understand what I have said to you."—"I understand it all," said Felix, and threw himself at the clergyman's feet; "but I conjure your reverence, do me but this one favour—have compassion on the heartfelt anguish which I endure. His salvation and mine depend upon your answer."—"But, my friend, only be convinced."—"No—no!—only let yourself be persuaded—you are a good man, and will repent this obstinacy when it is too late. All my happiness in this world—my forgiveness in the next, depend on your answer."—"But explain to me, in the first place, how it is possible that a mere accident ——"—"I cannot explain," exclaimed the youth "Has not Providence already revealed enough A mere accident, it may be said, has torn my father's remains from the grave, and annihilated the effect of your prayers and consecrations. These must be repeated, therefore, so that the devil who rages unseen in those frightful tempests

hould have no more power over him."—" But a
ıneral ceremony repeated is a solecism—a de-
arture from established rules, which I can by
o means submit to."—" This is your fixed and
nal resolve?" said Felix starting up, clasping
is hands as if in frenzy. " It is my resolve,
rtainly," answered the priest, " for I *dare* not
t otherwise."—" Well, then," said Felix, with
ı air of cold and frightful resolution, " there is
ıt one resource. Only promise me that you
ill attend at his funeral—that you will pray for
s soul's rest, and, on this condition, I shall di-
ılge an important, a horrible mystery." The
iest was much agitated. At this moment, a
eling of compassion and of terror overpowered
! other considerations. " I shall do all," said
, " that can in any way be reconciled to my
ıty. What would you reveal?"—" I would con-
ss that I—no—*he* must not suffer for my crime
-that *I* murdered my young master, the Baron,
the forest!" Again he raised his clasped hands
er his forehead, and would have thrown him-
lf on the ground, if the priest had not prevent-
him, and led him to a chair. " For Hea-
n's sake," said the old man, " be more com-

posed. Do you really know what you say?" I seemed, however, as if the youth's mind had be come perfectly tranquil, as soon as the dreadfu secret had escaped from his lips. He was pal and exhausted, yet resolute, and in a few second lifted up his eyes. "I am now content," sai he, "for you will no longer refuse my reques Is it not so?—You will again pronounce th church's benediction over my father's ashes, i order that my crime may not any longer distur his repose."—"I have already promised to d all in my power. Unhappy father, if he ha your guilt to answer for, he would, indeed, hav enough to suffer!"—"Then God bless and r ward you," cried the youth; "you will atter his funeral, and I shall go hence to prison!"

With these words he left the room with quiet, almost proud demeanour. The priest w so confounded that he never thought of detai ing him, but proceeded immediately afterwards the castle, where the steward was just on th point of sending for Felix, in order to talk wi him confidentially regarding the property of th Baron that had been found in the wood. A lon interview was requisite before the steward cou

even believe what the clergyman now repeated, so convinced was he of Felix's incorruptible fidelity and attachment. But then the priest's asseverations—the recollection of the young man's extraordinary mood of silent abstraction—the mystery which had always hung over his character—were indications too powerful to be resisted. He felt himself called on to act with promptitude and decision. He sent therefore in great haste for a police judge, but ere the latter could arrive, it was announced that Felix had come of his own accord, and given himself up as a prisoner. The judge soon made his appearance, and the culprit was brought before him. The captain of the French cavalry was also sent for, but, meanwhile, the pale, suffering, and yet determined countenance of the *chasseur*, almost made the steward falter in his duty. "Unhappy youth!" cried he, and paused, quite unable to ask a single question. "I must entreat," said Felix, "that I may neither be reproached nor pitied, for this would only confuse me so much, that I should not understand what I said. I know thoroughly, and feel deeply the extent of my own crime.

Let me be questioned, therfore, and I shall answer as correctly as I am able."

"Have you then put your master to death?" said the judge. "Murdered him!—Yes."—"And you will now freely confess in what manner this crime was committed!"—"Yes—in so far as it is clear to myself,—and I can recollect the truth, though, when I reflect on the subject, my brain is miserably confused."—"In the first place, had you accomplices?"—"Yes, Sir—my stepmother and stepbrother. Would to Heaven that I had never entered their house!" Struck with these words, the judge instantly began to write an order for the apprehension of these people, whose characters had always been suspicious, fearing that they might have already attempted to escape, and, in the meantime, the steward began to speak. "Felix," said he, "what could possibly have incited you, of all men, to a deed so atrocious?" "My relations, as I have already told you, led me into it," was his answer. "But you had kept up no intercourse with them since the time of your entering the Baron's service, till that of his murder?" "I met with them secretly in the forest." Till now, you never seemed

of a covetous disposition."—"No—but my evil destiny drove me on—I was already within the power of the devil, and must obey him."

"How, then, was the deed perpetrated?" resumed the judge.—"For this day I would gladly have been silent as to the direful circumstances. With accomplices, such a deed is not difficult. I struck him from behind on the head—he fell; my mother and brother rushed up—they gave him the *coup de grace*. He was, God be praised, dead in a moment. Then we robbed him, and buried the corpse."—"On the spot?"—"Aye."—"Can you lead us to the very place?"—"I know not if I could find it again, but I will try to recollect." The property that had been discovered in the forest was now laid before him, and he recognised it immediately as having belonged to the Baron. He was next questioned as to what booty had been obtained, and answered that there was a purse with gold coins—seven or eight *louis d'ors*, and some silver. He had only appropriated a small portion of this money, because his own wages were not sufficient to bury his father for the second time. Besides, there was a valuable watch, and a few diamonds, which he

sold altogether to a travelling Jew for twenty *louis d'ors*, which were still untouched among his effects. As for the clothes, they were, by the step-mother's advice, deposited in the hollow of a decayed tree. He added many other minute circumstances attending the deed; but as to his motives for such atrocious guilt, or the bargain that subsisted between the criminals—the veil of mystery could not be removed. As a robber, he might have found opportunities without number, during his residence in the castle; and it seemed impossible that he could have been led into the crime by persons with whom he had always been on bad terms. His evident confusion, when he spoke of them, made the matter more and more incomprehensible.

It now occurred to the steward, that the charcoal-man and his family might still afford some elucidation of this intricate event. "How comes it," said he, "that the young woodman observed you and your master together after you had been sent from the cottage."—"We were not together," answered Felix; "but I followed unobserved—I was then watching my opportunity. It was only mid-day when the Baron ordered me to re-

turn home, and I did not arrive here till night-fall."

During this examination, Felix became exceedingly agitated and enfeebled. He was conducted to prison, therefore, just as his two accomplices were brought in, and the judge resolved to examine them separately. The messengers of justice announced, that the news of Felix having accused himself of murder had spread like wild-fire through the village and neighbourhood, consequently they had found the mother and son in great confusion, and employed in packing up various effects. Of course they intended to have fled, though, by themselves, all such designs were denied. A chest also which belonged to Felix had been broke open, and, at the moment when the officers entered, the old woman was employed in cramming it with clothes. On searching the prisoners, there were found on the woman twenty, and on the brother five *louis d'ors*, rolled in paper.

At their examination, they not only denied all knowledge of the crime, but expressed the utmost horror at the enormity of the accusation against them. Both declared that Felix was of a most

malicious disposition, and had long since endeavoured, by every means in his power, to injure them; that, from earliest youth, he had been spoiled by his father's over-indulgence. They had often long conversations by stealth, and in secret, holding, no doubt, some wicked purposes in view. Moreover, it could be proved that they had often gone after sunset into the forest, and remained whole nights away from home. It was probable that the old man had treasures concealed somewhere, of which no one knew but himself and Felix, whose behaviour was always like that of a culprit haunted by an evil conscience; but, since his father's death, that wayward disposition had been more remarkable than ever. Nor would they allow that they had the most distant intention to fly, though they confessed that the rumour of Felix having been taken to prison for a murder had terrified them exceedingly, as they had little doubt, considering his malevolent temper, that he would try to involve them in his guilt; and, apprehending that the law-officers would search his trunk, they certainly had taken out the treasure, which was of much consequence to persons in their poor condition. As to the money being stolen, they

had not reflected on this point, nor was there any proof then established that it was so. Being cross-questioned, they persisted in the same assertions, and were at last removed and locked up in separate prisons.

One consequence of this unexpected discovery of a murder was, that the French captain could scarcely find any reasonable pretext for remaining longer at the castle. He insisted, however, that he must wait for further instructions from his commanding officer; and, meanwhile, watched with the most anxious curiosity the proceedings of the trial, seeming determined to witness its conclusion, which the steward hurried on as much as possible, from mere impatience to get rid of this disagreeable guest.

Felix continued invariably to maintain his first assertions; and some trifling incoherences in his deposition evidently proceeded from that feverish and agitated state of mind in which he had committed the crime. No one could yet form any rational conjecture what his real motives had been. He declared only that a dark irresistible impulse had hurried him on, and that his relations had added their utmost endeavours,—even forced him

to perpetrate the deed. The priest, by whom he was often visited, represented to him their steadfast denial of any participation in the murder; and he admonished him to beware of involving innocent persons in his own destruction. Felix answered resolutely, that "even those bitter expressions of his accomplices, especially regarding his father, whose death he ascribed to their bad conduct, only served to render their guilt more apparent. That they incited him to this crime was most certain; but he had no doubt that, with insurmountable effrontery, they would oppose themselves to the truth. He wished, however, that every method should be tried; and felt convinced that he would at last succeed, if their own conscience would be roused and made to witness against them. There was one circumstance, particularly in the last hearing, regarding a seal-ring, which he begged the judge might not overlook.

The fact was, that Felix remembered the Baron's carrying with him an antique ring, which, as it was somewhat clumsy and inconvenient, he did not always wear on his finger. The half-brother had appropriated this ring to himself, and had carefully secreted it, as, on being discovered,

it would have certainly betrayed him. Felix insisted that, if a proper search were made, it must be found among his brother's effects. He expressed a wish also, that, painful as it must be to his own feelings, he should be confronted with his accomplices. He requested also, that they might be present when he went to show the place where the unfortunate Baron had been interred, as he had been so much confused that he could better determine the place by watching their looks, than by his own recollection. This discovery had been delayed for some time on account of his declining health, which seemed every day to grow more feeble.

The half-brother, on being interrogated, denied steadfastly any knowledge of such a seal; he had never ever heard of it, and yet he was evidently quite confounded by the question. Among other deponents, several country people came forward voluntarily, who affirmed, that, during the time when Felix was stationed in the castle, the old woman and Hans George had often sent him messages, requesting that he would meet them in the wood at an appointed spot, or at their cottage; but he had always refused, and declared that he would

not hold any farther intercourse with them. These allegations had at first been contradicted by the accomplices; but, ere long, they were obliged, by the concurrence of many witnesses, to admit their truth.

CHAPTER III.

After much consideration and delay, Felix's request was agreed to, and all three were taken, with due precautions, into the forest. No sooner had Felix come within sight of his relations, than they began to overwhelm him with opprobrious epithets and reproaches, to which the officers of justice, however, soon put a stop. "Nay, nay; let them go on," said Felix with a look of wild defiance; "Even from my very childhood I have been thus upbraided; but now they will have to beg humbly for my compassion. Lead us on, mother, to the grave of the murdered man! You know it better than I do,—for, at his interment, you sent me elsewhere. Watch her attentively, gentlemen; her looks become every moment more disturbed, and we must now very soon be at the spot. She cannot avert her eyes from the morass yonder, and yet would willingly pretend that she

did not notice it. Therefore,—mark you,—her eye glares askance like that of a fox caught in a trap. She would look straight forward—and struggles to do so—but cannot. To the left, gentlemen. *There* must be the place !"

The steward and the judge, while Felix spoke thus, feigned indifference, and yet watched the culprits with great attention. Their countenances were convulsively writhen. The old woman's visage grew pale as death when the party marched on towards a marsh full of tall rushes, across which there was a rustic bridge of a single plank, for foot-passengers. " Is it not so, mother ?" said Felix ; " here is the place where we lay in watch for him. You remember, too, where he was struck, and how the blood flowed." The old woman for a moment forgot her fears in excessive rage. " Silence, villain !" cried she, bursting into tears ; " I am innocent of the deed you have imputed to us, and defy your malice. You cannot distract me ; but you may confuse and mislead these gentlemen. I beseech you, Sirs, command him to be silent."— " Stand still here, Hans George," resumed Felix in a deep voice, while his eyes gleamed with wrathful defiance ; " was it not on this very spot where

you were seized with a fit of terror, so that you threw away the bloody hatchet with which you had given him the second stroke? Your mother scolded, and told you that, though past use for woodcutting, it might still be useful in the household. Was not this the very place?"

Hans George fixed his eyes on the ground, and trembled. The woman clenched her hands, grinned with rage, and would have rushed against Felix as if to tear him in pieces, had she not been withheld by the officers. "Hans George—you are afraid," said the judge; "you tremble visibly—confess then at once—it may be the better for you."—"He is an unprincipled liar!" answered the woodman. "I have nothing to confess. It is by his calumnies, and these alone, that we shall be brought into the hands of the executioner." Felix, without minding him, stepped up rapidly to a large stone that was half sunk in the morass. "If I am not mistaken," said he, "it must be here. Look then, mother and brother—you can bear witness for me." Both were dreadfully agitated, and would not look up. At last the woman screamed out, "Thou art the murderer, and thou alone know'st where he is laid. May I never

see the light of Heaven after this day, if I know aught of the grave."—"It seems not to be in this place," said one of the workmen, who had already begun with their shovels. "The ground is far too hard and tough."—"Nay, nay, work on," said Felix; "if it be not there, I have quite failed in my reckoning. In that case, you must beg of my stepmother, in all courtesy, that she will give you information."

The workmen trenched the ground to a considerable depth, but without effect. Felix could not give them any better directions, but he insisted that his accomplices, who had chosen the place, must know better than he did. They persevered obstinately in their denial. "Will you deny, too, all recollection of the hollow tree, mother?" said Felix, with a glance of irony; "the willow-tree, where you concealed the clothes? Nay, this is not right to deny a friend who served you in need—one too who would for ever have been silent—who has a conscience far quieter, and more trust-worthy than mine. Shall I help you to find it mother?"—"I cannot tell what he now means by this raving," said the woman sobbing in her terror; "I know nought of any hollow-tree."—"Nay, nay, you

knew all about the tree long ago, mother," said Felix; "and when, but a child, I learned from you that ryhme—

"Three times three makes nine I trow;—
The half is five one might allow,
In the middle there is gold to find—
Go boldly then but look behind."

"What can he mean by this?" said the old woman; "to a child one must talk nonsense."—"Nonsense?—well, but have a little patience.—Mark you there, gentlemen, along this old fence on the moor there are nine willow-trees—count now, from both ends to five, and where your numbers meet lies the hidden treasure. Can you deny, mother, that you know the decayed willow-tree? If you pretend ignorance thus about the most innocent trifles in the world, you suffer your plan of deception at once to be seen through."

"Well then," said the old woman, "certainly I do know the hollow-tree—but of what consequence is this? When the young lad's father used to be at work in the forest, I have often placed his food there, and can lead you to it immediately." "*Der tausend*, mother!" said Felix; "you are grown bold. Perhaps Hans George has been

on the alert, and cleared away the clothes." "What clothes?" said she; "I have never hidden any such things there."—"Softly, softly," said Felix ironically; "it is no matter—the blood-stains were washed out you know." The tree was soon identified. There was in it a hollow of considerable depth, and, not without time and labour, the officers drew from it a green hunter's jacket, with gold lace epaulets, and several other articles of dress. At this discovery, Hans George and the woman looked ghastly pale; however, they re-assumed their effrontery, and declared that they had never seen them before. The steward proved immediatly that the dress had belonged to the Baron; but here ended the day's investigation, which, no doubt, strengthened the suspicions against Felix's relations, but without leading to any final determination. The French officer, who had watched all these proceedings, still seemed distrustful; but the judge had great hopes, from a new examination of the prisoners together in the audience hall of the castle, which he resolved should take place directly on their return thither, before they had time to recover from their present state of agitation and fatigue.

Suspecting that this hearing was to take place, Felix begged to speak with the steward in private, and besought him to think of some stratagem by which these people might be surprised and terrified into confession. The steward, reflecting on various methods that had been resorted to on such occasions, lamented that there was not in the castle a portrait of the young Baron, for, as it might be supposed that these miserable culprits had never seen a well-painted picture, the unexpected production of a strong likeness might have a powerful effect. It occurred to him, however, that there was a portrait of the Baron's father lying neglected in an upper-chamber, where it had been laid, after his death, in order that the sight of it might not more deeply agitate his unhappy widow. It was a half-length the size of life, and, being taken in early youth, had a great resemblance to his son; the dress, too, though of an old fashion, was also of a green colour. This picture was immediately sought for, cleaned from dust, and brought to the hall where the prisoners were now to be confronted. Felix himself was not informed of this plan, though, on his entrance, he immediately saw the picture, which was placed in an opposite corner. His

relations were led in by another door, and so stationed, that they could not observe it without turning round.

Felix's confession, now reduced circumstantially to writing, was read over to them, and, as before, they denied steadfastly all participation in the deed, though the scenes of that morning in the forest seemed not without an effect of abating their confidence and courage. Hans George still exulted, however, because the seal-ring had not been discovered, and wished this should be looked on as evidence that the other accusations against him were unfounded. "Nay—nay," answered Felix, "one may be mistaken; it is true—have you ever entrusted me with the key of your chest, or allowed me to look into it?"—"Give you the key of my chest?" said the other—"to what purpose, indeed? Perhaps that you might put things into it, as you did into the hollow of the tree. No—no, I am too well aware of thy malice."—"Malice?" answered Felix—"no, by Heaven, only zeal for the truth, which will yet be proved clear as the sun-light. I must entreat that the judge will order his coffer to be brought hither. I have never had the key. This

much you have just now heard from himself, and yet I know that the seal must be found among his effects. Mother, you know this also. Did you not advise that it should not be sold, and should be kept out of sight, though you were both too covetous to destroy it altogether?"—"Gentlemen," said the old woman, "I beg, for God's sake, that you will order him to be silent. He always invents new wickedness and calumnies against me, but Heaven sees my innocence."—"Say, rather, your guilt, mother," replied Felix; "and even *the dead* behold your guilt. This also you know; and, therefore, you could never look on a corpse if the eyes were open. Is it not so? Notwithstanding all your efforts, the murdered man would not close his eyes. Only turn round—he is standing behind you, and will vouch that you are swearing falsely." Involuntarily, at these words the woman turned half round, saw the portrait of the Baron, that seemed gazing sternly on her. She uttered a long terrific scream, fell on the floor, and was carried out insensible. Hans George had also looked round, his limbs tottered, and his lips quivered; but, recovering self-possession, "It is only a

picture," said he. "Why would you beset poor ignorant people with delusions like these? You have driven my wretched mother to madness. This is not dealing fairly with us."—"Excellent!" said Felix, who was evidently rejoiced at the confusion produced by the picture; "there comes an officer with your coffer. Now, we shall deal with you on another score. We shall have proofs that you must allow to be fair and regular." The key was already in the judge's possession, and as he applied it to the lock, he admired its complicated workmanship. In the chest were found only old clothes and other trumpery that had been examined before. "Search again, however," said Felix; "it is no ordinary coffer, but one which he persuaded my father to give him during his lifetime, and it was said that there were secret drawers, though I have never seen them. Hans George has often told me, if I had any property, to lock it up carefully or it would vanish, and, doubtless, he followed his own counsels. I gave him back the seal. Can'st thou deny it, brother?" Hans George kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and would not answer a word. Acting on these hints, the judge ordered that

the box should be broke asunder with a chisel. This was done, and in the bottom was found a secret drawer, in which were the seal, and several *louis d'ors*. Hans still pretended ignorance. "These things must have been placed there during his father's life," he stammered out; but was evidently so terrified, that he could scarcely support himself. "In my father's lifetime," replied Felix. "No—the seal was then in possession of its rightful owner. But we should like to hear how you came by the *louis d'ors*. Did my father make you a present of them with the box? or did you not find more property than I knew of, at the time when you cut off the murdered man's finger to get possession of his ring?"—"Reckless perjured villain!" cried Hans George in great wrath—"what right hast thou to question me, or wherefore should I answer thee? Gentlemen, these *louis d'ors* were not stolen, but honestly won."—"Mark that," said Felix, "and yet he knew nothing—absolutely nothing of the seal which lies among them."—"Aye, truly," answered Hans, "now I must speak. He gave me the seal that I might lay it up in safety, as he had no coffer with a good lock. I was obliged

to swear him a solemn oath that I would not betray it to any one, and therefore have been silent."—" How," said Felix, his eyes kindling with rage; " You dare to say that *I* demanded an oath of *you*."

At that moment, an officer announced that the old woman had recovered from her faint, and had, in her extreme terror, promised to confess all. She was, accordingly, brought again to the bar. " You have promised to tell the truth," said the judge. " Lose not a moment then, but say at once what you know of the murder."—" Not a word," said she, " I dare not speak till you tell me whether that horrible apparition be still here." —" What apparition ?" exclaimed Hans George eagerly. " 'Twas but a painted image set up on purpose to terrify and confound us. Be not insane, and confess what is not true." An officer was obliged to grasp him by the collar before he would be silent. " Now, then ?" said the judge in a threatening voice. " Alas ! I know not what I can divulge," said the old woman. " The form which I beheld in this room, whether it were a ghost or a picture, seemed to be the young Baron, just as I had seen him when alive, and I

confess that I was terrified. It is true, also, that I cannot look on a dead man if his eyes are open ; but this is a weakness—not a crime. Now, that malicious boy wishes to be revenged on me, because I left him alone with his father's body ; but I gave him copper money to lay on the eyelids, which would afterwards bring wealth into his own pockets. Alas ! God help us, it has brought wealth indeed, but won by murder, and, therefore, accursed. Thus I, unhappy woman, am repaid evil for good."

It was found impossible to lead her into any real confession. Both mother and son continued obstinate in their denial ; but their guilt was looked on as unquestionably proved, and they were declared convicts. Even the French officer was now satisfied that the trial was at an end, and on the same day when the proceedings were sent in writing to be ratified in the capital, he took his departure to join the main army, as it was expected that a decisive battle would immediately take place. Instructions also arrived for the steward from the guardian of the young Baron.

For some time no farther intelligence was received. The French troops had completely disap-

peared from the neighbourhood of Sonnenberg, and it was hoped that public tranquillity would, ere long, be restored. The old woman and Hans George spent the term of their confinement in the utmost misery and impatience, while Felix, on the contrary, became perfectly tranquil, engaged with humble obedience in the pious duties enjoined him by the clergyman,—indeed, seemed more cheerful than he had been at any former period. At last the fatal day arrived. The process, as it had been sent to the capital, was pronounced perfectly correct, and the three culprits were doomed to death. Felix as the murderer, was to die last, and his sufferings on the wheel were to be longer than those of his accomplices. With deep overpowering emotion, but in devout silence, he listened to his sentence, while the mother and brother broke out into the most horrible imprecations against him and the judge. They howled aloud, threw themselves on the ground, and prayed for mercy. When all this was in vain, they had recourse to Felix, in the same manner, conjuring him not to appear before the throne of God, when his conscience was loaded with such malicious falsehood. The severity and anger with which

he had formerly regarded them, were now past away. "God knows," he said, uplifting his clasped hands, "I would willingly retract my accusation of you if it were in my power, and gladly too would be the means of bringing you to repentance and contrition. But is it not enough, and cannot this console you, that I, who am the least guilty, whose existence you have poisoned and embittered, should die the most painful death? Away, away!—think on this—and in eight days, at the place of execution, we shall meet again."

At these words, both culprits trembled violently. Hans George, still prostrate, clasped his hands for the first time, and a confession seemed hovering on his lips. Then the folding doors were burst open, and, how great was the astonishment of all present, when, recognised on the instant by every one, the young Baron, Ernest von Sonnenberg, whose supposed murder they were about to avenge, stood once more visibly among them! "What means all this?" said he, panting with impatience; "I could scarcely believe what has been told me. I, forsooth, am looked on as no more! —I have been assassinated, and my faithful friend Felix is the murderer! Let me behold his accuser,

that I may instantly, and on the spot, punish him as he deserves." Hans George and the old woman uttered a cry of triumph ; Felix seemed much confused, and fixed his eyes on the ground. The judge was so astonished, that for some moments he could scarcely speak. At length he said, " there stands the accuser. Felix has himself declared that he was your assassin." The Baron stood for some time in silence—tears started into his eyes—he ran to Felix and embraced him. " Have I understood you ?" said he at last ; " did you, indeed, resolve by sacrificing your own life to save mine, and protect my castle and domains from devastation, for I well know into whose power they fell during my absence. Speak, then, my faithful chasseur—how can I ever recompense such unexampled generosity."—" No, no, my Lord," exclaimed Felix, with great emotion ; " I should not, indeed, speak the truth, if I denied having thought of your safety—but that motive alone was not the cause of my self-accusation. But are you indeed out of danger ?" added he ; looking eagerly round the hall.

" The French are now completely beaten out of this district," said the Baron ; " the tide has

turned once more in favour of true patriotism and valour."—" Gentlemen," he proceeded, turning to the judge and other officers ;—" I was warned very suddenly, when it was almost too late, of the danger by which I was threatened, and from which flight could alone effect my extrication. I dared not have more than a single confidant, and for this purpose I chose Felix. It was only by means of assuming one of his ordinary dresses, that I succeeded in arriving at a place of secure refuge, where I have since remained in perfect tranquillity, and where I should been till this hour, had I not accidentally heard of his danger, and, therefore, forgotten my own. Who are these other prisoners ?"

" His own relations, my Lord," said the judge; " who are condemned to death for aiding him in the supposed murder."—" But, Felix," said the Baron, " what could possibly have induced you to frame such an accusation against your stepmother and brother ? This, indeed, was a fearful crime."—" A crime," answered Felix, with a deep sigh. " Oh, Heaven ! what can I now say ? My Lord, do you not recognise again the woman who was afraid of the dead man with his eyes

open, and who fell to the ground fainting when you looked through the window? Make a trial now whether she dares encounter your eyes if you gaze on her?" The Baron stept up to the bar. "Look at me, then, woman," said he—but she turned away pale and shuddering. "The relentless villain!" said she; "he labours also to make me suspected by the Baron."—"My Lord," said the steward, who had been lost in deep thought,—"did you ever before your sudden disappearance, of which, till Felix's strange deposition, I suspected the cause—did you ever give to him, in a present, your watch and diamond broach?" "By no means," answered the Baron, "for I still have them: I only gave him twenty *louis d'ors* as a reward for his faithful services, and because I did not then know if I should ever see him again." —"Nor, consequently, did he ever receive from you an old-fashioned gold seal, with your arms engraved on a white stone?"—"I have never had any such seal in my possession."—"Felix," said the steward eagerly—"did you not then give the seal to your brother? Whence did it in reality come?"—"He received it from me—I placed it in his hands—but from whence it came is a

very different question, which I cannot answer.—Ask Hans George, he can tell you if only he is willing to do so."—" Speak out, then," said the steward, turning to Hans. But the joy and triumph which had been visible on this man's features were now quite vanished,—and he could not lift up his eyes. " I have said already," answered he, " that I know nothing of the ring, and I adhere to my assertion."—" For Heaven's sake," cried the Baron, " tell me, was it a ring with a white stone, which a lion's head holds in his jaws?"—" It is precisely so," said the judge, more anxious than ever. " I have, indeed, never seen the ring," continued the Baron, " only I remember that I have heard my mother speak of it; she said that my father always wore such a one on his finger."—" It was cut off," said Felix, as if involuntarily—then paused abruptly, and bit his lips. All eyes were turned from him on Hans George, who now seemed quite overpowered, and the old woman was more agitated than ever.

" Murderers of my unfortunate father," said the Baron, " are you, then, at last discovered?"—" Speak out," said the steward,—" confess without hesitation, for there are so many proofs

against you, that you cannot escape death; only by repentance and candour, you might obtain milder treatment. Think of this." Hans George appeared ready to speak, but his mother prevented him. With her eyes rolling wildly, she fell prostrate before the Baron. "Mercy—mercy—my Lord Baron!—Pray, turn your eyes away—for I know not if you be he whom we murdered, risen from the grave to witness against us. Alas! we have indeed suffered, and been tormented enough already by that villain, who has broken his oath, and we shall now confess all!"—"No, mother. God forgive you!" interposed Felix in a tone of gladness—"I have not broken my oath; but you have now relieved me from its bondage. I must force you to proceed as you have begun, and the weight is completely taken from my shoulders. Narrate, then, what I dare not utter—for it is now too late for you to retract. When you have confessed all, it will be my time to speak."—"How, Felix!" said the Baron in a tone of painful surprise—"*you* then knew of my father's murder?"—"An oath, my Lord, a solemn and fearful oath held me silent, nor am I yet wholly freed from such restraint. This oath was the

the bride, with whom, as I told you, I was indissolubly betrothed. Thank Heaven, it now seems that we are to be divorced at last."—" Hans George," said the judge sternly, " this discovery of the ring is conclusive—you are the murderer of the late Baron." In a firm resolute tone, he answered, " No."—" He was not the murderer," screamed the woman—" we both, and the boy there are equally guilty ; we were accomplices, but it was my husband who committed the deed, —the father of that traitor who now labours to bring infamy on the mouldering bones of the dead."—" No, mother," said Felix ," I have done all that was in my power to obtain for him the mercy and forgiveness of Heaven. I have taken his guilt on myself, that he might find rest in the grave. But now, gentlemen, I must beseech you, send for the clergyman,—he alone can tell me if I am yet released from my oath, and dare speak freely."—" You must have been very young," said the judge, when that murder was committed."—" Eight years old," said Felix. " And when you were but a mere child, persuaded to take an oath ?"—" Forced—worshipful Sir,—forced—my stepmother held out the prayer book ;

my father was not unkind, and only begged me to submit; but, behind him, Hans George threatened me with a knotted club-stick."—"Such an oath could not possibly be binding," said the judge; "and if this was the secret that so many years weighed on your spirits, it might have at once been dismissed as unworthy of notice. Why did you not sooner ask advice from the clergyman on this point?"—"Nay, how could I venture to do so? The question whether an oath is binding, suggests already that an oath exists, and this would have given rise to farther questions, and the most painful embarrassment."—"Now, then, Felix," said the Baron—"tell your story freely, and without reserve—we know that we shall hear the truth from you, and these people must at last be brought to confession."

"I was a boy of five or six years old," said Felix, calmly, "when my father, who was then a widower, came to live in this district. He soon became acquainted in the house where we have resided ever since; and when the forester died, he married the widow, and obtained her late husband's appointment, on the express condition that her son, who now stands there, should

succeed to it in case of my father's death. He himself was the only one in the house who behaved kindly to me; and my early youth was melancholy enough, for my father was involved in endless disputes, and Hans George always took his mother's part. Therewas, indeed, no blessing, and no prosperity in that house. It appeared that my father had left debts in the place where he formerly resided, which must be paid. Oftentimes we were visited by strange suspicious-looking people, and at last it was said that all our poor effects must be sold. The stepmother and Hans often urged my father to try various expedients, at which he always shook his head, and would not agree, whereupon they were so incensed, that they more than once threatened his life. The late honoured Baron used often to ride alone through the woods, and pay visits in the neighbourhood. One morning he happened to be passing our cottage, when the saddle-girth broke, and his lordship fell to the ground. My father saw the accident, ran up to adjust the saddle, while the Baron, being covered with mud, came into the house, that his clothes might be dried and brushed. At that time he wore—I recollect it well—

a green hunting-coat, with broad gold lace. He took it off, and also his waistcoat,—and laid his purse upon the table. It was full of bright gold pieces, that shone through the net-work. The mother and son looked significantly at each other, and on me too such an unwonted sight made a deep impression. In half an hour the Baron was gone, and had, of course, replaced the fatal purse in his pocket. The family spoke of him anxiously for a long time. My father was of opinion, that he now rode on his way to the house of a neighbouring Freyherr, where there was always a pharo bank, and that he would probably return richer than he went, being invariably fortunate at play. My mother declared that such a sum as she had actually beheld in the purse was more than enough to make our fortune for life;—that all we required, therefore, was only courage to waylay the Baron in the forest, put him to death, and take possession of that treasure. My father seemed at first to be struck with the utmost horror at this proposal, but his diabolical tempters both attacked him by every possible method, reproached him with his debts, questioned him whether he would rather do this, or wander for

the rest of his life through the wide world as a miserable beggar; not forgetting to explain also the precautions that might be used in order to avoid all suspicion.

"And let me have but a new jacket, and a little piece of the gold lace,' cried I, in my innocence, having yet no conception of the atrocious deed which they had planned. 'Mark that,' said my father eagerly, as if a great weight had been taken from his spirits. 'Our plan would never succeed, for the child has been watching, and has overheard all.'—'Of what consequence is it?' said my stepmother. 'He shall go with us into the wood, and look on. Thus he will learn to be silent. We shall treat him like the Baron if he does not know how to hold his tongue.' After a long struggle, my father was obliged to submit. Consequently, the Baron was waylaid on the moor, and dragged from his horse. One blow of a heavy bludgeon from my father's arm took from him all consciousness and power of resistance. The second blow, inflicted by Hans George with a wood-axe, almost split his head asunder. Full of abhorrence at his own deed, (that I must say for him,) he threw away the

bloody weapon into the morass. My stepmother scolded him for this, as she was searching the pockets of our victim. I stood at her side and wept bitterly. My father got possession of the money, but found there was little more than was sufficient to pay his debts. The Baron had lost, perhaps, rather than won at play. The others distrusted him, and thought he had concealed part of the treasure. I could myself suppose that this was possible, as, if it ever came into their hands, he might be very certain that they would appropriate it to their own purposes. My mother had taken the gold watch and hunting dress; my brother tried to pull off the ring, but as it resisted his efforts, he cut off the finger with a knife. My mother, at that moment, uttered a loud scream, for she insisted that the dead man had opened his eyes, and looked at her angrily. In great terror she wrapt up her booty and fled. Since that time, if, by any chance, she were near a dead body, she dared not look on it, without first asking if the eyes were closed. The remains of the Baron were buried in the morass, and for some weeks afterwards, fearing that we might be suspected, and our house searched, most

of the booty was deposited in the hollow of the decayed willow-tree.

" As soon as we all met together under our own roof, a solemn oath was exacted from me. I was made to swear on the prayer-book, that I would not reveal to any mortal, either by words or writing, what I had seen ; and, henceforth, I was almost every day reminded, that, if I divulged the crime, I should be condemned to death for it as well as they. By the terror and aversion inspired by such admonitions, they themselves laid the ground in my mind for an earnest wish that the deed should one day come to light, and I foresaw that my lot in this world would be very miserable. As soon, too, as I had entered on the years of adolescence, I was made to repeat my oath with even more solemnity than before. My father, though he did not complain in words, yet was evidently weighed down by repentance and despair, and rapidly drew nearer to the grave. In his bitter contrition, he gave me much affectionate and pious counsel, which I have never forgotten. I was silent and reserved, on which account Hans George and his mother hated me, for they always

suspected that I would at last betray them. I went about as if in a dream, and neither night nor day could find rest.

"I had many times proposed to question my father whether the oath that had been exacted from me were indissolubly binding, though, as long as he lived, I determined at all events to be silent. But, before I had requested his instructions as to what I might afterwards do, he died very suddenly.—His unexpected fate rendered me more anxious and wretched than ever; and, from the terror which my stepmother betrayed on the night of his death, I thought that a new appeal was made to our guilty hearts, and that we ought at least to atone, by repentance and confession, for our horrible deed. I visited the church regularly on all Sundays and holidays; but, notwithstanding the good instructions of the priest, could not resolve what I ought to do.

"The kindness shown to me by my beloved master, the Baron, would have consoled me for all my distresses, if it had not been that I considered myself unworthy of his protection. I could only prove my gratitude by fidelity and attachment. My blood flowed ice-cold in every vein, when he

once said in the forest that he would give half his fortune to any one who would reveal who had been the murderer of his father. The proposals that he now and then made of bestowing on me a fixed income, and presenting a dowry to a young woman whom I loved, caused in my heart anguish that was almost insupportable. An inward voice exclaimed against me—'Thou dar'st not think of love; thou dar'st not involve another in thine own misery. That load of concealed guilt which thou wilt carry with thee to the grave, must be revealed at last, and would be revenged on thy children.'

"It happened, at length, that my master received intelligence, which obliged him to seek temporary safety in flight. In order to avoid all suspicion, after he had ordered me, in the presence of witnesses, to ride home alone, we met privately in the wood. I assisted him to put on some clothes which I had deposited there to be ready for him, and he concealed his own in the hollow of the willow-tree. Notwithstanding all my entreaties, he would not allow me to go with him, but forced on me a present of twenty *louis d'ors*, and rode away. I was obliged, by the steward's injunctions, to remove from the castle to the cottage, which abode was

to me quite intolerable. Discontent more than ever preyed upon my heart. I had several long consultations with the steward, and found that a rumour of the Baron's death might at present be attended with great advantage. Accordingly, though I had not yet formed any regular plan, I took a large handkerchief, stained it with blood, and threw it down, along with a pistol, (which also the Baron had given me,) in a part of the wood where I knew that they must be discovered.

"This took place according to my expectations; but the steward was suspected of the stratagem, so that I was obliged to conclude that I had done more harm than good, and felt that, in order to rescue the Baron and his property, I must have recourse to methods more effective.

"At that time, it happened that my father's body was thrown out of the grave,—no peace even in consecrated earth;—what an admonition for his son! My mind was agitated by a tempest of conflicting emotions. It appeared an indispensable duty that I should reveal the murder, and bring the real authors of the deed—the relentless instigators—to punishment; and suddenly a gleam of light broke on my gloomy meditations. I thought

that I might take my father's guilt on myself; I might also be the means of saving my honoured master, by submitting to condemnation and death as an assassin. My father's accomplices and seducers, who now, in their enormous wickedness, refused even to grant his remains a second interment, might be driven to confess their crime, if I surrendered myself up as guilty of a murder which I had never committed. These ideas united by degrees into a regular systematic plan. 'Give yourself up,' said I, 'as your master's assassin. Accuse them as your confederates, and describe the circumstances of the supposed deed exactly like those of another which you have sworn never to reveal.' Still I wanted resolution, till the clergyman's refusal to perform the funeral ceremonies a second time, and the religious terror that I felt on account of my father's punishment in another world, wound up my determination. As soon as I pronounced the fatal words, I became almost perfectly tranquil, and have never for a moment regretted what I had done."

Here he paused. The confessions of the real criminals corresponded, except in some minute trifles, with his own statement. They were led

back to prison, but Felix was ordered to resume his usual attendance on his master. As soon as they were alone, he threw himself at the Baron's, feet, and begged that either he might be sent back to prison as an accomplice like the others, or that his father's remains might be left to rest in the earth, instead of being publicly burned by the executioner. Another feeling now tormented him. He could not bear the thoughts that he should have obtained his own rescue and welfare by the destruction of his relations, however worthless. The Baron kindly tranquillized him on both these points; and when the papers regarding this second trial were prepared, he went with them himself to the capital, and, by his influence at court, obtained a change of the usual decree in such cases. The forester's body was allowed to rest undisturbed; and the criminals, instead of being broken on the wheel, were adjudged to perpetual imprisonment in the house of correction.

Thereafter, cheerfulness and joy prevailed, for the first time, in this young man's heart. The Baron perceived, however, that active employment was required to prevent his relapsing into low spirits. He himself engaged with the utmost

ardour in the final struggles against the French tyrant; and Felix was allowed, at his earnest request, to attend his master, and fight by his side. His conduct, on these occasions, was so highly honourable, that his name was mentioned with distinction through the whole army. The glorious wreath of liberty was at last won; both returned in safety to Sonnenberg; where the silent Felix, now rather named *the fortunate*, found the steward's daughter as handsome, and as much attached to him as ever. The Baron rejoiced in this opportunity to reward his faithful attendant. He provided him, according to promise, with a moderate independence, and the remainder of his days were passed without a cloud.

THE SPECTRE BRIDE.

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CHAPTER I.

THROUGH the whole summer, there had been delightful weather, and the Baths of W—— had been more frequented this year than at any former period;—but, though the rooms and public gardens were always crowded by guests, it seemed by no means to follow that a social and convivial spirit should prevail among them. The nobility flocked together quite apart; the military had their own separate club; and as for the citizens, they made criticisms harshly enough on the conduct of both. Even the balls that were frequently given failed to produce unanimity; nor could it be otherwise, for the master of ceremonies always appeared at them with his star and ribbon, attended by a train

of lacqueys in red coats with gold lace. This, joined to the stiff, formal manners of himself and all his family, constantly reminded the *commoners*, that they must not, on any occasion, step beyond their prescribed rules and limitations. Consequently, those public assemblies became every day less and less attended, and private family circles were made up to pass away the evenings.

One of these minor clubs used to meet twice or thrice in the week, at a large room in one of the hotels, which they knew would, at such times, be unoccupied. Here they supped, and entertained themselves with conversation merely, without thinking of cards, having the advantage too of a large beautiful garden behind the house for their promenade. The members of this society had all been acquainted with each other before now,—only one individual had introduced himself who was a stranger to them, and to every one else at W——. He was styled Marquis, which title seemed, in his case, not a little extraordinary, as, according to the list of arrivals, he was neither of French nor Italian extraction, but had a name that might perchance be Norwegian, Islandic, or Russian,—a string of consonant that no reader

could even attempt to pronounce. Altogether, his manner and appearance were strange and mysterious; his pale visage, tall meagre frame, and stern black eyes, were so little adapted to inspire confidence, that he would certainly have been shunned by all the world, if he had not possessed a fund of entertaining anecdotes, which were gladly drawn upon to dispel *ennui*. It was universally allowed, however, that his stories required rather more credulity than his listeners were always willing to afford.

Our party had, on one occasion, supped together as usual, and this time rose from the table in very bad humour. The fatigues of a dancing assembly, which had lasted very late the preceding night, still weighed on their nerves; and though the moon shone invitingly, not one among them showed any inclination to walk. They seemed too tired even for conversation; no wonder, therefore, if the Marquis, who was absent, should be wished for now, more than he had ever been. "Where in the world can he have staid so long?" said the Countess, impatiently. "Doubtless once more at the pharo table, where he drives all the bankers to despair;" said Florentine. "Merely on

his account two of these gentlemen set out suddenly from Wiesbaden, and will not return hither in a hurry."—" Their presence may well be dispensed with," said another of the party. " By us, no doubt," replied Florentine; " but not by our master of ceremonies, Mons. le *proprieteur*, who has forbidden gaming, indeed, only that it may be carried on with greater perseverance."—" The Marquis, however, should avoid such conduct," said a certain chevalier in a mysterious tone. These gamesters are revengeful, and generally are well-connected in the world. If that be true, which is now whispered in various quarters, that the Marquis is involved in dangerous political schemes"——" But, after all," said the Countess interrupting him; " what injury has he committed against the pharo bankers?"—" Nothing more, indeed," answered the chevalier, " but that he stakes on cards which never once fail to win. And it is strange enough that he seems not to take advantage of this to benefit his own fortune, for he always confines himself to the lowest possible risk. But, of course, the other players do not neglect to follow his lead—they stake

high—win invariably—and the bank is ruined even at a single game."

The Countess was about to answer, when the Marquis's entrance put an end to the discussion. "So you are come at last?" said the chevalier. "We have this evening longed exceedingly for your entertaining conversation," added the Countess; "and this time, more than ever, you have chosen to absent yourself so late, that it seemed you had forgotten us altogether."—"I had, indeed, some particular business in view," said the Marquis, "in which I have succeeded to my entire satisfaction. To-morrow, probably not a single pharo bank will exist at Wisbaden. I have gone from house to house, and the result is, that we have not post-horses enough to carry away the outrageous bankers."—"Cannot you assist us to learn this wonderful art of yours?" said the Countess. "Not easily, Madam," he replied. "A lucky hand, doubtless, is required, and I can give no other explanation."—"But, in truth," said the chevalier, "your hand is so lucky, that, in all my life, I have never heard of any one who could compare with it."—"At your time of life," answered the Marquis, "this is no great argu-

ment—you have yet much to learn for the first time in the world." And, with these words, he looked at the young man so steadfastly, that the latter said—" Are you inclined, perhaps, to cast my nativity ?"—" Only not at present, Mons. le Chevalier," interposed the Countess, " for who knows whether your horoscope might lead to any diverting adventures, such as the Marquis, some days ago, promised us ?"—" Diverting, did I say ?" said the latter. Surely, in that respect, you are mistaken."—" At least you promised us some very extraordinary incidents, and such are absolutely requisite, in order to rouse our party from the lethargy in which we have been lost for several hours."—" I shall not refuse," replied the Marquis ; " yet I should like to know, in the first place, if any one here has yet heard the story of the Spectre Bride ?" Of course, all answered in the negative, and expressed the utmost impatience for its commencement.

" I had already made many appointments," said the Marquis, " to visit my friend the Count Globoda, at his castle in the country. On our travels we had met together in almost every district in Europe ; in youth, and in middle age, we

had been cordial friends; and now, when years began to steal on us, we both wished to meet once more, and talk over our past adventures. Besides, I had an additional motive for visiting my friend's house, as I have been always an admirer of fine scenery, and he described his estate to me as one of the most romantic in the world. The castle, too, was wonderfully ancient, yet had been so well built and preserved, that it was still habitable, and kept up in all its ancient magnificence. The Count used to live here with his family almost the whole year, spending only a short winter in the capital. I knew this; and being certain of finding him at home, I came quite unexpectedly one night, just about this season, and was delighted to behold, by moonlight, the fine varied country, and flourishing woods, by which the noble rocky old fortress was environed.

"The kindness with which I was received, did not prevent me from remarking an expression of reserved grief and anxiety which lay on the countenances of the Count and his lady, from a share of which, too, their beautiful daughter Libussa had not escaped. I understood, after some time, that they had never been able to forget the twin

sister of this your lady, whose earthly remains had been deposited about a year preceding in the castle chapel. Libussa and her sister Hildegarde had been so exactly like one another, that they were not to be distinguished, except by a small red mark on the neck of the latter, whose apartments, with their furniture, were preserved just as she had left them, and were occasionally visited by her friends in their hours devoted to melancholy recollection. Libussa and she had only one heart, and one mind. Their parents, therefore, could not persuade themselves that the separation here could be long, and were harassed by apprehensions, that their beloved and beautiful Libussa would also be taken from them.

" I did, of course, what I was able, to divert their thoughts, by relating stories from my own past life, and tried to lead their attention from such mournful reflections; nor was I disappointed in my endeavours. Sometimes we used to make excursions in the fine summer weather through the country; and often explored the oldest apartments of the castle, many of which had been long untenanted, admiring the rude but warlike manners of the Count's ancestors, of whom

there was also a noble range of portraits in the picture gallery.

" One evening, after the Count had for a long time spoken with me confidentially of his plans for the future, among other things, of his wish to see Libussa fortunately married, as, although only in her sixteenth year, she had already attracted many suitors, and rejected every one, the gardener rushed breathless into our room, with the intelligence, that a ghost had been seen below, which must certainly be that of the old castle chaplain, who, according to tradition, had appeared, for the first time, as a *revenant*, about an hundred years ago. Several other servants followed this man, and, with pale ghastly visages, all confirmed what he had said. ' You will be terrified, ere long, at your own shadows,' said the Count, and sent them away with the order, that, whatever they might choose to say to each other, they would at least spare him the trouble of listening to such absurdity for the future. ' It is awful,' said he, turning to me, ' to reflect, what absurd lengths the superstition of these poor people carries them ; and how impossible it proves for any one to eradicate this folly. For about a

century, indeed, the story has been current here, of an old priest foosooth, who is said to walk about the castle, and even to read prayers in the chapel, and so forth. This fable, since I have been proprietor here, has been kept pretty well in the back ground; but, as I now perceive, it is impracticable to get the better of it altogether.'

"At this moment a new visitor was announced —the Italian Duke de Marino. 'The Duke de Marino?' repeated the Count in a tone of perplexity, and declared that he could not recollect ever to have heard such a name before. 'I have been a good deal acquainted with that family,' said I, 'and a short time ago was present at the betrothing of the younger duke in Venice.' The entrance of our visitor, which now followed, would have, therefore, been very agreeable to me, had I not perceived that our mutual recognition was, on his part, attended with great embarrassment and agitation. 'Well,' said he, recovering his composure after the first salutation, 'now that I find you, my Lord Marquis, I need not be surprised at what occurred to me a little while ago. I supposed that my name was perfectly unknown in this country, and yet when I drew near the

castle, a voice called out three times, ' Welcome —welcome Duca de Marino !' It was a strange hollow tone, certainly, and yet, Marquis, I am indebted to you for that reception.'

" I assured him, that till his name was announced from the corridor, I was perfectly unaware of his approach to the castle; nor could any of my servants have addressed him, as the valet who attended me in Italy had been long since dismissed. ' Besides,' added I, ' it would have been exceedingly difficult to have recognised any equipage, however well known, in the gloom of such a night as this.'—' Very true,' answered the Duke, ' and in that case I am perfectly at a loss.' He looked much confounded, and the Count, determined not to listen to aught that was in any degree marvellous, assured him, with great politeness, that the voice, whose soever it might be, only expressed very truly the sentiments of the family towards their distinguished guest.

" Before a single word had been said as to the purpose of this unexpected visit, Marino begged that I would allow him the favour of a private conversation, and then entrusted me with the secret, that he had come thither on account of the

beautiful Libussa. If he were so fortunate as to obtain her affections, he would immediately request her hand in marriage from the Count. 'Good Heaven,' said I, 'have you then had the misfortune to lose your bride whom I saw at Venice—the Countess Apollonia?'—'Of this I shall speak at another time,' was his answer. 'From the deep sigh that accompanied these words, I concluded, that the young bride had, by infidelity or some other fearful offence, been separated from the Duke, and that I must not venture to revive painful emotion by farther questioning. As he begged, meanwhile, that I would use my influence with the Count in his favour, I was obliged, however, to remind him how strange and hazardous a marriage might be considered, which was sought after on no other ground but that of the wish to efface painful impressions of an earlier and unfortunate connection. But he answered me, that I did him real injustice by the light in which I had now placed his conduct,—that he cherished the utmost respect as well as admiration towards Libussa,—and would consider himself the happiest of men if she should not reject his addresses.

" The enthusiam, indeed, with which he spoke of her, quieted my apprehensions, and I promised that I would prepare the Count for an interview on the subject, and would acquaint him fully with the Duke's fortune, family, and character. At the same time, I declared that I should not vote for a hasty marriage, as I by no means wished to load my own shoulders with the responsibility of having brought about an irrevocable transaction, which might or might not prove fortunate. The Duke was content with what I had said. At the same time he exacted from me a promise, which appeared to me then perfectly innocent, that I would not mention the circumstance of his former connection with Apollonia, as he would otherwise be exposed to the necessity of very tedious and disagreeable explanations.

" The Duke seemed to succeed in his purposes with wonderful rapidity. He had a fine manly figure, and eyes so sparkling and expressive, that they made their way at once to Libussa's heart. His agreeable conversation was very welcome to the old Countess, and, by his knowledge of rural economy, he promised to be a most useful assistant to our worthy host in the management of his

estate. As to the Duke's disinclination ever to revisit his own country, that was a point ascertained and adjusted at the very outset. Marino did fail zealously to make to make use of the advantages he had gained; and one afternoon I was exceedingly surprised to hear that Libussa and he were immediately to be betrothed. I imagined this would scarcely have been spoken of for a long time to come. After dinner, the discourse naturally revived what I had mentioned once before of my having been present at the betrothing of a certain Duke de Marino in Italy, and the old Countess inquired whether the hero of that day were not a near relation of their friend.' 'Yes—a pretty near relation,' answered I, not forgetting my promise of secrecy to the Duke, who now threw across the table a very embarrassed look at me. 'But now, my dear Marino,' said I, wishing to change the subject, 'tell us, once for all, I beseech you, how were you first induced to come to this remote castle? Did some friend inform you of the Countess Libussa's extraordinary beauty, or had you, perhaps, seen her portrait? For yesterday, if I remember right, you said that you had intended to make a tour of a year long, going

from one place to another, when, all at once, in Paris your intentions were changed, and you came straight hither, no doubt, solely on her account.

"'In Paris—yes,' answered the Duke, 'you have remembered correctly. I had gone to look at the picture gallery of the Louvre, but no sooner had I entered the room, than my attention was attracted from the lifeless beauties on the walls to a young lady, whose unequalled charms were heightened, in my estimation, by a certain cast of pensive melancholy on her features. With trembling timidity I ventured to approach her, and remained always near at hand, yet without venturing to address to her even a single word. When she left the gallery, I followed, and took her servant aside to inquire her name. This he frankly gave me; and when I expressed an earnest wish to pay my respects to her father, he told me that a meeting could hardly take place in Paris, as the family were just preparing to take their departure from France.

"'Yet at one time or another I may be more fortunate,' said I, and looked round for the lady; but, meanwhile, under the belief, perhaps, that her servant was always following, she had walk-

ed on, and was now out of sight. In trying to find her I lost the servant, and thus ended my first adventure. ‘ And who was the lady ?’ inquired Libussa. ‘ Who ?—Can you ask ?’ said the Duke in a tone of the greatest surprise. I told you the story in jest, indeed, as if it were quite new—but is it possible that you did not observe me that day in the gallery ?’—‘ I, indeed ?’ exclaimed Libussa. ‘ My daughter ?’ said the Countess, ‘ it is incredible.’—‘ Nay, indeed,’ resumed the Duke. ‘ The same servant whom, to my great satisfaction, you left behind you in Paris, and whom I hailed one night as if he had been a guardian spirit, told me all that I wished to know, so that, after a short visit to my native country, I came hither.’—‘ What strange story is this ?’ said the Count to his daughter, who remained speechless with wonder. ‘ Libussa,’ added he, turning to me, ‘ has never yet been out of her native country—‘ and, for my own part, I have not visited Paris for sixteen years.’ The Duke now looked as much perplexed as they did, and the conversation would have died away altogether, if I had not started a new subject, which I was obliged to keep up alone.

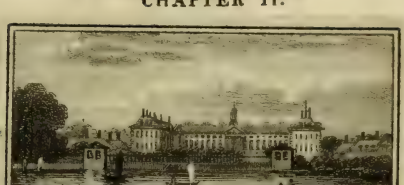
"Afterwards, when we rose from table, the Count drew Marino into a window recess, and though I was at a considerable distance from them, and *seemed* inattentive, I could yet hear all that they said. 'My Lord Duke,' said Globoda, very gravely, 'what in all the world can have led you to that invention of the scene in the picture gallery, which, as far as I can understand it, will serve no purpose whatever? If you wished only to conceal the cause of your visit here, you might say so at once, and there an end. Or even if you disliked this method, you might have evaded the question in a hundred ways, and it was quite needless to outrage probability with such violence.'—'My Lord Count,' answered the Duke, much offended, 'I was silent at table, because I believed you had private reasons for concealing the circumstance of your daughter's residence in Paris. I was silent out of mere delicacy. But the situation in which I am now placed, forces me to maintain firmly what I then asserted, and unless you will allow the subject to drop, I must assert before every one, that Paris is the place where I had the happiness of seeing, for the first time, your daughter, the Countess Libussa.'—'But what if I should

bring before you all my people,' said the Count, 'all my servants and vassals, to prove, as witnesses, that Libussa has never been out of her native land?'—'In despite of all this,' replied the Duke, 'I should still believe rather the evidence of my own senses, which bear testimony that, in my estimation at least, is not less important.'—'What you say is very mysterious,' said the Count, in a more moderate tone; 'your grave manner convinces me at all events that you have yourself been under some delusion—and that you have unquestionably taken some other person for my daughter. Forgive me, therefore, for the irritation of temper into which I was unfortunately betrayed.'—'Some other person!' cried the Duke: 'it would then follow that I have not only mistaken another for your daughter, but that her servant was also different from what I supposed him to be; yet he described to me all that I find in this castle and its environs, precisely as they now exist around me!'—'My dear Marino,' answered the Count, 'it follows only that this servant must have been an impostor, who was well acquainted with our neighbourhood, and who persuaded you that some other lady

that you met at Paris was my daughter.'—' I am afraid, my Lord Count,' said Marino, ' to contradict you in direct terms; but absolutely the features I then beheld were those of Libussa, nor, since that meeting in the gallery have they been even for a moment absent from my remembrance.'

" Globoda shook his head significantly, but the Duke resumed; ' Still another proof,—yet forgive me if I now deem it necessary to mention a circumstance which would otherwise, certainly, never have escaped my lips. When I stood behind the lady at the Louvre, it happened that her handkerchief had been drawn a little aside, and on her neck, that was otherwise white as alabaster, I observed an extraordinary red mark.' ' What in God's name means this?' cried the Count; ' you seem determined that I should be forced into the belief of things utterly incomprehensible.' But only let one question be answered, ' Can this mark be found on Libussa's neck?' ' No,' replied the Count, staring in the utmost astonishment at his intended son-in-law. ' Is it possible?' said Marino, in a voice faltering with affright. ' I have told you the truth,' said the Count; ' but it is no less certain that Libussa's

twin sister, Hildegarde, who resembled her in every feature, had the mark which you describe, and carried it with her to the grave more than a year ago.'—' Yet it is only a few months,' answered Marino, ' since I saw that lady in Paris.' At this moment the old Countess and Libussa drew near, anxious to know what could be the purport of this long conversation, but the Count's manner of receiving them was so stern, that they durst not venture any questions. He retreated with Marino farther into the dark window recess, and I could not distinguish another word of their discourse.



CHAPTER II.

" No one knew what to conclude from the extraordinary orders issued by Globoda, at a late hour of that same evening. He directed the sacristan to attend him, in order that the coffin of the deceased Countess Hildegarde should be opened in his presence. Before this was done, however, he repeated to me summarily the strange story which the Duke had told him, and placed it at my choice and that of the young nobleman to be present at the investigation. The latter excused himself, saying, that he could not help shuddering at the mere thoughts of such a scene. He had always a great horror of the dead, and especially in the night could not overcome this weakness. The Count in reply, only begged of him that he would preserve a strict silence as to the adventure in the picture gallery ; especially that he should not run the risk of shocking Li-

bussa's feelings by any detail of minute circumstances attending it, though it was to be expected that she would question him what could have been the subject of the prolonged discourse at the window.

"The sacristan came meanwhile with a lantern, and I determined to attend the Count. On our way to the chapel, the latter said to me, 'It is scarcely within the limits of possibility (for probability is now out of the question) that any deception should have been practised as to my daughter's death. The circumstances as to that event are all known to me; and you may readily imagine, Marquis, that our parental love did not permit her funeral obsequies to be performed too early. But suppose, for a moment, that this had been possible—that the fabulous legend of the robber were revived, and that, on her coffin being opened, she had awoke and come forth—it is not surely to be thought, that our beloved daughter, instead of flying for protection into our arms, would have gone hence into a distant country. Even had she been *forced* to go hither, at all events she would have written letters, or found her way home ere now. At present, however, my

own eyes shall convince me, whether this coffin yet holds her sacred remains. I shall have proof,' he added, in a tone so loud and agitated, that the sacristan looked round with affright.

" Being thus put on his guard, the Count resumed, almost in a whisper. ' Yet how could I allow myself to believe, that of our dear Hildegarde's beautiful features even a trace can yet be remaining,—that the worm would spare his destined prey, however lovely?—Let us return, Marquis; for although the coffin were opened, how should I be certain that the skeleton found there was not that of a stranger? It is in vain to proceed.' In truth, he was resolved to give up his design, even when we had come to the church door; but I suggested, after he had gone so far, he should now certainly carry through the examination. If the story of the robber had been realized, it would, at least, be possible to ascertain whether any of the ornaments or jewels were removed, which had been laid with her in the coffin. Besides, there were instances where a body remained long in the grave without being destroyed.

" These remarks had their intended effect, and

we followed the sacristan, who, by his paleness and trembling, betrayed a very decided aversion to his present employment. I know not, if any one in this party has ever stood at midnight before the grated door of a burial vault, beholding the piles of leaden shrines, in which are deposited the mouldering remains of a distinguished train of ancestors. But it is certain that, at such a moment, even the rattling of the keys in their locks makes a deep and mysterious impression ;—that when the door is forced open, one feels at the grating of the rusty hinges as if he were committing a fearful crime, and is glad to linger on the threshold, before he enters into the dark abode of the dead. The Count experienced all these emotions as much as any one could do. This, I perceived by the deep sigh—almost a groan—which he heaved as we stood there. He controlled his agitation, however, by a great effort; did not allow himself to look at the other coffins, but went directly to that of his daughter, of which he lifted up the cover with his own hands. 'Did I not say so?' I exclaimed, as on the first instant we perceived that the body had so precisely the features of Libussa, that I was obliged to withhold

my astonished friend from imprinting the kiss of an affectionate parent on her forehead. ‘ Nay,—touch her not—disturb not the repose of death, said I,’ and endeavoured as quickly as possible to withdraw him from the frightful vault into the free air of the living world.

“ We found the two ladies and the Duke in a state of painful anxiety. They had both urged on him questions as to the long conversation which he had held with the Count, nor were by any means satisfied with his answer, that he had promised not to speak on the subject. Now, they applied to us, but of course with as little success. On the following morning, however, their curiosity was in some measure gratified by the sacristan, who was sent for privately, and who, at least, told all that he knew. By this means their anxiety was only rendered the more vehement, to discover what could have given rise to that strange violation of the sepulchral sanctuary.

“ For my own part, I reflected for the rest of the night on that inexplicable apparition which Marino had doubtless encountered in Paris. Ideas suggested themselves, which I would willingly

have communicated to the Count, if I had not been so well aware that he was an absolute infidel as to the possible intercourse subsisting between the spiritual and corporeal world—so that it was needless to dispute with him on that point. Under such circumstances, it proved very agreeable to me, that the whole affair, though certainly not forgotten, was very seldom made the topic of conversation.

"Ere long, however, I had other reasons for being extremely anxious and perplexed. The Duke constantly avoided speaking with me in private of the young lady to whom he had formerly been betrothed. From this circumstance, and the embarrasment betrayed by him whenever I spoke of her seeming amiable temper and extraordinary beauty, I could not help supposing that Marino had, in consequence of his meeting with the pretended Libussa, become unfaithful, and that he had basely deserted the Countess Apollonia without any fault on her part to warrant such conduct. With such impressions on my mind, it was impossible that I could expect happiness for Libussa in her approaching marriage, and I resolved to take the very first opportunity of tearing

off his mask, so that he might repent of his cruelty, and return ere it was too late to the forsaken bride.

"Sooner than I could have anticipated, I was enabled to fulfil this plan. We were seated one evening at table after supper, and the conversation happened to turn on the question, whether injustice and wickedness are always punished in the world. I remarked that I had known, within my own experience, very striking examples of this, so that the old Countess and Libussa begged earnestly that I would make them acquainted with one at least of the instances to which I had alluded. 'If I am to do so,' said I, 'you must permit me to choose a story in which the characters and incidents, as I think, concern you very nearly.'—'Concern us? How is that possible?' said the Countess, while I cast a significant glance at the Duke, who had been for some time mistrustful of my interference, and now looked at me with the pale ghastly visage of one whose own conscience reproaches him. 'Such, at least, is my opinion,' I resumed; 'but ere commencing, I must request the Count's indulgence if the supernatural should again be interwoven with my nar-

rative.' 'You need have no hesitation on that score,' said he with a smile; 'and as to my wonder how you should have chanced to encounter spectral and supernatural adventures in abundance, while not one ever fell in my way, I shall for the present say nothing.' It did not escape me here that the Duke gave him an approving nod, of which I took no notice, but answered the Count, 'It is perhaps not every one who has eyes to see what passes before him!'—'That proposition is self-evident,—not every one certainly,' answered he. 'And yet,' said I in a whisper, 'that body which had so long remained unchanged in the grave was by no means an ordinary spectacle.' He seemed perplexed; but I added, 'and yet this, doubtless, admitted of explanation on natural principles. It would be absurd to refuse you the benefit of that argument.'—'But we are wandering from the subject,' said the Countess in a dissatisfied tone; and without farther delay I began my story. 'The scene of the adventure I mean to describe was Venice.' 'Then,' interposed the Duke mistrustfully, 'I probably should know somewhat of the matter.' Perhaps,' answered I; 'and yet, the circum-

stances were, for certain reasons, kept as private as possible. Besides, it happened about a year ago, when you had already set out on your travels.'

"Now for my story.—The son of a very rich nobleman, whom I shall now designate only by his Christian name Felippo, had, during his residence at Leghorn, which town he had visited on account of some inheritance that devolved on him, paid his addresses to a beautiful young girl—obtained the consent of her relations—and, being for the present under the necessity of revisiting Venice, he promised that he would, in a very short time, come again to Leghorn, in order to celebrate a marriage with his beloved Clara. Their attachment seemed mutual, and their parting was even frightfully solemn. After they had exhausted the power of words in reciprocal protestations and vows, Felippo invoked the avenging powers of darkness to bring destruction on his own head if he should be unfaithful, and wished that his intended bride should not even find rest in the grave if he deserted her, but follow him still to claim his love, and extort it from him in another world. When these words were uttered, Clara's parents

were seated at table with the lovers;—they recollected their own early life, and did not attempt to stop these romantic effusions, which at last were carried so far, that the young people both wounded themselves in the left arm, and mingled their blood in a glass of white champaigne. 'Inseparable as these red drops have now become, shall our souls and our fates be for ever!' cried Felippo. He drank half the wine and gave the rest to Clara, who pledged him without hesitation.

"When I had arrived at this part of my story, the Duke became remarkably restless, from time to time casting on me most threatening looks; so that I could not help concluding, he had, in his own life, been the hero of a scene resembling that which I had described. However, it is most certain that I had merely repeated the circumstances of Clara and Felippo's separation, from a letter that I had read from the girl's mother at Leghorn, of which I shall say more afterwards.

"Recollecting these vehement protestations of the most ardent and unchangeable passion, (I continued,) who could have thought it possible that Felippo would conduct himself in the manner that he did soon afterwards? On his return

to Venice, a young beauty had just made her appearance there, who had hitherto been educated at a distant convent, but now suddenly emerged like an angel from the clouds, and excited the admiration of the whole city. Felippo's parents, who had heard of Clara, but looked on his adventure with her as only one of those love affairs which may be made up one day, and forgotten on the next, introduced their son to this young stranger. Camilla, for this was her name, was distinguished not only for her beauty but for her wealth and high birth. Representations were made to Felippo, what influence he might gain in the state by means of an alliance with her; the licentious gaiety of the carnival, which now drew on, favoured his addresses, and, in a short time, the recollection of his engagement at Leghorn was almost banished from his mind. His letters to Clara became always more and more cold and laboured, till her complaints of this change induced him to give up the correspondence altogether, and to make preparations as soon as possible for his marriage with the rich and very beautiful Camilla. The trembling hand, and traces of many tears which now appeared in Clara's letters, had no effect

whatever on his volatile heart. Even the threat that she would soon fall a victim to her grief, and, according to contract, that her avenging spirit would not cease to follow him, made no impression on Felippo, who now rejected every idea but that of the happiness which he would enjoy with his beloved and enchanting Camilla.

"This young lady's father, with whom I was so well acquainted, that I lived as familiarly in his house as if it had been my own, had invited me already, by anticipation, to the wedding. Though an extraordinary pressure of business had this year detained him in town, so that he could not enjoy so much of the country life as usual, yet we made excursions several times in the week to his fine villa on the banks of the Brenta, where the marriage festival of his daughter was to be celebrated with all due magnificence. A particular circumstance made this be postponed, however, for a considerable time. As the bride's parents had always lived very happily in the married state, they wished that the same clergyman, by whose good offices they were united, should also pronounce the nuptial benediction over their daughter. But the clergyman, who, though now

far advanced in years, had shown hitherto no decline of his faculties or strength, was now seized with a slow lingering fever, which did not allow him to leave his bed. At length, however, he began to get better, and a day was appointed for the betrothing. Yet, as if some supernatural influence were exerted to prevent this, the clergyman, on the morning agreed on, was again attacked with such nervous weakness, that it was impossible for him to quit his own house; he therefore sent a message, to say that they should choose another priest for the ceremony. The parents, however, insisted obstinately on their proposal that they would have no other clergyman, and, doubtless, would have been spared much grief afterwards if they had never departed from this resolution. The banquet and other festivities had meanwhile been arranged so far, that they could not be interrupted, and fell to be looked on as a confirmation of the lovers being solemnly betrothed. Already, at an early hour in the morning, the gondoliers, in their gayest apparel, were in waiting, and a brilliant party, with bands of music, all rejoicing in confident expectations, set out on their voyage to the bride's

country house. At the dinner banquet, which was protracted till late in the evening, rings were, as usual, interchanged between the lovers; but no sooner had that ceremony taken place, than a most horrible piercing shriek was heard by the whole party with astonishment—by the bridegroom with a cold shuddering through every limb. Every one started up, and ran to the windows, for the voice seemed to come from without; but, though the twilight still rendered objects visible, it was impossible to discover any cause for this extraordinary alarm.

"'Halt there!' cried the Duke, interrupting me, with a kind of wild laugh, and the expression of an evil conscience, more and more obvious in his features; 'the loud cry at the window is known to me as well as to you—it is borrowed from the Memoirs of Clairon, the French actress, who was, in this manner, persecuted by one of her deceased lovers. After the cry, recollect there was always a clapping of hands. My Lord Marquis, you will not forget this in your ingenious romance.'—'And for what reason,' said I, 'should you conclude that this incident could not happen in the life of any one else but Clairon?

Your disbelief of my story seems the more extraordinary, as you allude to a well-authenticated fact in her life, which should rather support than invalidate the tenor of my narrative.' He said no more, and I proceeded.

"Soon after this unaccountable disturbance, I happened to request of the bride, who sat opposite to me, that I might be allowed to look again at her marriage-ring, which was of very beautiful workmanship; she nodded assent, but, to her great consternation, it was no longer on her finger. Search was diligently made—all rose to give their assistance for that purpose, but in vain; the ring was irretrievably gone! The hour, meanwhile, drew near, at which the evening amusements were to commence. The masked ball was to be preceded by a very brilliant display of fireworks on the river. The party arrayed themselves, in the first place, in their fancy dresses, and entered their gondolas. But the silence that prevailed among them all was, on such an occasion, most extraordinary; they could not possibly recover their spirits. The fireworks were admirable, yet, notwithstanding their success, only a feeble 'bravo' was heard now and then among the spectators.

" The ball, too, was one of the most brilliant that I have ever witnessed. The dresses were magnificent, and so loaded with diamonds, that the light of the countless wax candles was reflected through the room a thousand fold. The bride, however, excelled every one in this display, and her father delighted himself with the conviction, that no one could compete with his beloved and only daughter. As if to be more thoroughly convinced on this point, he went through the room looking at the ornaments worn by the other masks, till, all at once, he was struck with the utmost astonishment, on discovering that jewels of the very identical fashion and lustre were worn by *two* ladies, his daughter and a stranger, at the same time ! He confessed to me afterwards, that he was weak enough to feel his pride hurt at this occurrence. His only consolation was, to reflect that, however rich these jewels were, they would be surpassed out of all measure by a wreath of diamonds and rubies, which was to be worn by Camilla at the supper-table.

CHAPTER III.

"When the supper-party had at length assembled, and the old gentleman made his remarks as before, the strange lady, to his utter consternation, made her appearance with a wreath precisely like that of his daughter's. His curiosity now got the better almost of his politeness, and as she still wore her mask, he could not help addressing himself to her with the words, 'Fair lady, might I venture so great a liberty as to ask your name?' The incognita, however, shook her head with a mournful abstracted air, and did not answer him one word. At the same time, the house-steward came and wished to know whether the party had been increased in number, as the covers appointed for the dinner-table were now found insufficient. His master answered in the negative, and, in a tone of much irritation, insisting that the servants must have made some blunder. The

steward, on the contrary, maintained that he was perfectly correct. Another cover was laid accordingly, and, on counting the guests, it was found that there was one more than the number that had been invited. As he had a little while before, in consequence of some careless expressions, rendered himself obnoxious to interferences of the police-officers, he thought this addition to his party must have been caused by them. Being perfectly satisfied that nothing would at present take place in his house on which the police could make any remarks, he determined, in his own mind, to avoid any disturbance of the present festivity. It would be better, he thought, to represent to the government afterwards the insult they had inflicted on him; therefore, while most of his guests had thrown off their masks, he deferred his intended proposal, that they should *all* do so till the close of the entertainment.

"Universal admiration was excited by the extraordinary luxury displayed at this final banquet. In the variety and excellence of his wines, our host surpassed all that had been hitherto known at Venice, and yet he was not satisfied. He lamented, especially, that a misfortune had hap-

pened to his red champaigne, so that he could not produce a single glass of that liquor. At this time the party seemed well disposed to make up, as fast as possible, for that want of joviality and high spirits which they had betrayed through the preceding entertainments. Only in my neighbourhood—I mean where I sat at table—it fell out very differently. We had only one unanimous feeling—that of curiosity, which completely triumphed over every other. I was placed near the lady who wore jewels exactly resembling those of the bride, and observed that, besides never touching food or wine, she did not vouchsafe to return a single word when spoken to by the other guests, but, meanwhile, kept her looks constantly fixed on Felippo and his bride, who sat together.

"Her presence and strange conduct could not possibly remain unobserved, and the remarks that were, by degrees, spread about from one guest to another, once more damped the spirit of conviviality which, for a short time, had been revived. There arose a whispering all round the table, and the prevailing opinion was, that an unfortunate attachment to the bridegroom must be the cause

of the incognita's eccentric manners. However this might be, those who were nearest her at the supper-table left their places on the first opportunity offered for a change, and sought elsewhere for a more agreeable situation. Afterwards, however, many of the party assembled round her, for the sole purpose of discovering who she really was, expecting that, after all, she would unmask, and prove to be a well-known friend—but in vain!

"At last, when white champaigne was handed round, the bridegroom also drew near, taking the chair next but one to the silent lady; and now, indeed, she seemed to be more animated;—at least she turned round towards her new neighbour when he addressed her, which she had never done to any one else, and even offered her glass, as if she wished him to drink out of it. It was visible, however, that by her attentions Felippo had been excessively agitated. He held up the glass in his left hand trembling like an aspen leaf, pointed to it and said, 'How comes it that the wine is red? I thought we had no red champaigne!' —'Red,' said the bride's father, who had drawn near, with his curiosity stretched to the utmost; 'What can you mean?'—'Look only at the

lady's glass, answered Felippo. 'Well,—it is filled with white wine, like all the rest,' said the old gentleman, and he called the bystanders to witness, who, with one voice, declared the wine to be white.

"Felippo would not drink it however, and when the silent lady turned round on him a second time, he trembled even more than before, insomuch that he quitted his place at table, took his host aside, and when they had conversed for some time privately, the latter, having taken his resolution, addressed himself in a loud voice to the company: 'For reasons,' said he, 'which are afterwards to be explained, I must request, as a particular favour, that *all* my worthy friends now present, will, for a moment, take off their masks.' As in these words he only expressed a general wish, his request was complied with in an instant,—every countenance was uncovered, that of the silent lady excepted, on whom the looks of the whole party were turned with an expression of disappointment and suspicion. 'You are the only mask left among us,' said her host after a long pause; 'dare I not hope that you will indulge me so far?' She persisted, however, in the same

coldnes of manner, and remained incognita. This vexed the old gentleman so much the more, as he discovered, among the rest, without exception, *all* the friends that he had invited; so that this lady was, without any doubt, the individual who had been added unexpectedly to the number. At the same time he did not venture to force a removal of her disguise, as the extraordinary value of her jewels took away all his suspicions that a spy of the police had intruded himself, and he would not run the risk of offending a person who was evidently of high rank. She might, perhaps, be some acquaintance who had arrived suddenly at Venice—heard of his brilliant entertainment, and, as a harmless jest, resolved to make one at the masquerade without being discovered.

"Meanwhile, it was thought right, at all events, to make some inquiries among the servants; but, notwithstanding the great number of strange lacqueys and female attendants that were at the villa, none could be found who would acknowledge this lady for their mistress, nor could any one of his own household recollect when or how she arrived; and their ignorance was the more unaccountable, as the lady must have retired to her toilet in or-

der to put on the beautiful wreath with which she appeared at the supper-table.

"The mysterious whispering which had for some time supplied the place of all lively conversation, now became more remarkable, when the lady suddenly rose from her place, waved her hand, and nodded to the bridegroom, then retreated towards the door. The bride, however, would not suffer him to follow,—for she had long observed the attention with which the incognita had regarded him. Nor had it escaped Camilla's notice, that he had been frightfully agitated when he was offered the glass of wine, and she began to fear that some mad attachment to Felippo had been the cause of this extraordinary scene. In spite of all her objections, however, she could not prevent her father from following the unknown,—and when she had got beyond the door, he redoubled his pace in order to keep up with her. But, at that moment, the same horrible shriek which had been heard during the dinner banquet was repeated with an effect tenfold more frightful amid the stillness of the night, and when our host had got beyond the outer gateway, not a trace was to be found of the mysterious visitor. The people in at-

tendance there, knew nothing of her, and though the banks of the river were crowded with gondoliers, not one could acknowledge even to have seen her. These events had such an effect on the whole company, that only one desire now seemed to prevail among them, that of returning to their own homes as fast as possible,—and the old gentleman was forced to order the gondolas to be in readiness at a much earlier hour than he had intended. They departed, accordingly, in a mood very different from that in which they had arrived in the morning.

"On the following morning I found Felippo and his bride again in their usual spirits. He now began to think as she did, that the incognita was some unfortunate person 'crazed with hopeless love,' and as to the frightful cry that had twice alarmed the party, it might have been only an absurd trick of some intoxicated gondolier. It was not so easy to account for the lady's arrival and departure without being observed; but this, too, might be explained by the bustle that prevailed, and inattention of the porters. As to the disappearance of the wedding-ring, it could only be supposed that some one among the

servants had slight-of-hand and dishonesty enough to conjure it into his own pocket, from whence, of course, it would not be recovered. In short, they seemed resolved to overlook all difficulties and objections that might have been made to these explanations, and were only distressed that the priest, who should have come to pronounce a blessing on their contract, was now declared to be at the point of death; and, on account of the old friendship subsisting between him and my friend's family, they could not properly think of the final ceremonies being performed within the very week after his decease. On the day of the clergyman's funeral, however, a fearful check was given to Felippo's levity and high spirits. A letter arrived from Clara's mother, informing him that her unhappy daughter had, in her grief and disappointment, died for the sake of her faithless lover; moreover, that she had declared in her last moments, that she would not rest in her grave till she had compelled him to fulfil his promises.

"This alone made such an impression on Felippo, that the wretched mother's added maledictions were quite superfluous. He found also, that the mysterious shriek, which had been heard

when the rings were exchanged, had been uttered precisely at the hour and minute of the poor girl's death. He was forced also to believe, however unwillingly, that the unknown lady had been his forsaken Clara's ghost, and this thought deprived him at times of all self-possession. Henceforward, he always carried the letter about with him, and sometimes drew it unconsciously from his pocket, and stared at its agonizing pages. Even Camilla's presence could not always prevent this, —and as she of course ascribed his agitation to the paper which he thus impolitely and silently perused, she availed herself of an opportunity when he had let it drop on the floor, and seemed quite lost in thought, to examine, without ceremony, what had caused him such distress. Felippo did not awake from his reverie, till she had perused the letter, and was folding it up with her countenance deadly pale, so that she must have fully understood her own painful situation. He then threw himself at her feet in a mood of the sincerest anguish and repentance—conjuring her to tell him what he now ought to do. 'Only let your affection for me be more constant than it was for this poor unfortunate,' said Camilla;

and he vowed this from his inmost heart. But his disquietude constantly increased, and when the day of their marriage at last arrived, became almost quite overpowering. When, according to the old fashion of the Venetians, he went in the twilight before daybreak to the residence of his bride, he could not help believing, all the way, that Clara's ghost was walking by his side. Indeed no loving couple were ever accompanied to the altar by such fearful omens as those which now took place. At the request of Camilla's parents, I was there in attendance as a witness, and have never since forgotten the horrors of that morning.

" We were advancing in profound silence towards the church della Salute, but, already in the streets, Felippo whispered to me several times, that I should keep away that strange woman, as he feared that she had some design against his bride. ' What strange woman ?' said I in astonishment. ' Not so loud—for God's sake be cautious,' answered he ; ' you see, no doubt, how she is always endeavouring to force herself betwixt me and Camilla.'—' Mere phantasies, my good friend,' said I ; ' there is no one here but our own party.' —' God grant that my eyes had deceived me !'

he replied; ‘ only dont let her go with us into the church !’ added he, when we arrived at the door. ‘ Certainly not,’ said I, and, to the great astonishment of the bride’s parents, I made gestures as if I were ordering some one away. In the church we found Felippo’s father, on whom his son looked as if he were taking leave of him for ever. Camilla sobbed aloud, and when the bridegroom called out,—‘ So, then, this strange woman has come in with us after all ;’—it was thought doubtful whether, under such circumstances, the marriage could be performed. Camilla, however, said in her changeless affection, ‘ Nay, nay—since he is in this unhappy state, he has the more need of my care and constant presence.’

“ Now they drew near to the altar, where a gust of wind suddenly extinguished the candles. The priest was angry that the sacristan had not closed the windows ; but Felippo exclaimed, ‘ the windows indeed ! Do you not see who stands here, and who just now carefully and designedly extinguished the lights ?’ Every one looked confounded, but Felippo went on hastily, breaking away from his bride. ‘ Do you not see, too, who is just forcing me away from Camilla ?’—At these

words, the bride sank fainting into her mother's arms, and the clergyman declared that, under such impressions as these, it was absolutely impossible for him to proceed with the ceremony. The relations on both sides looked on Felippo's situation as an attack of sudden madness, but it was not long before they changed this opinion, for he now fainted as Camilla had done,—convulsions followed—the blood forsook his countenance—and, in a few moments, their concern for him was at an end. Notwithstanding every effort made to assist him, he expired. Now they were unanimous in believing that he had been poisoned, but as to the person who had been guilty of that crime, no conjecture could be formed, and afterwards, when surgeons examined the body, they could not find the slightest confirmation of such suspicions.

"The relations, who, like myself, were informed by Camilla of the circumstances which had disturbed Felippo's peace of mind, resolved to keep the matter as private as possible. However, the mysterious lady who had appeared at the festival was still spoken of, and her visit could not satisfactorily be explained; it was also very wonderful that the ring which had been so often

sought for in vain was now found among Camilla's other ornaments. So my long narrative ended.

" ' That is a marvellous legend, in good earnest,' said the Count. The Countess heaved a long sigh, and Libussa said, ' To say the truth, I should rather not have listened to it—I felt many times a cold shuddering in every limb.' ' No doubt,' answered I—' every new betrothed bride or lover must feel in this manner, who hears my legend, as the Count is pleased to term it ;' and with these words I looked at Marino, who had frequently started up from his chair, and evidently could not get the better of his apprehensions that I was meditating formidable opposition to his present plans. When we retired to rest that evening, he whispered to me, ' I have a few words to say in private,' and I brought him into my own chamber. ' I perceive your kind intentions,' said he,—' this lying story that you have made up.'—' Halt,' cried I, greatly enraged—' you have heard that I myself was a witness. How dare you accuse a man of honour of premeditated falsehood ?'—' Of that question afterwards,' said he scornfully ; ' but for the present let me observe, that wheresoever you have got the anecdote of the

wine mixed with blood, I know from whose real life that story was first derived.'—' It was taken from the life of Felippo', said I ; ' of this you may be assured. But that a similar circumstance may have happened elsewhere, I shall not dispute with you ;—this is very possible, and credible, and most love adventures resemble one another more or less.'—' Be that as it may,' said Marino, ' I now demand of you, that, from this day forward, you shall make no farther allusions to my past life. Under this condition alone shall I forgive you for your former ingenious devices.' ' Forgiveness!' cried I, ' conditions, forsooth, and both from you!—this is rather too much. On the contrary, I take the liberty of informing you, that the Count shall, to-morrow morning, be made fully acquainted with your former engagements, and of your expressions to me this night.'—' My lord Marquis,' replied he, ' if you ventured this.'—' Ha—ha!—I shall venture it however,' answered I ; ' it is a duty that I owe to an old friend. The liar who has thought proper to accuse me of a falsehood shall no longer be permitted to wear his mask in this house.' Contrary to my own wishes, anger had carried me so

far, that it was impossible to avoid a challenge. The Duke determined instantly on this method of concluding the matter, and, at parting, we agreed to meet next morning with pistols in a neighbouring wood.

"At daybreak, accordingly, we made our appearance there, each attended by a servant. As Marino observed that I had not prepared my attendant with directions what should be done in case of my death, he undertook this duty himself, and gave orders for the disposal of my body, as if the worst had already happened. At the same time, he had the insolence to remind me, that he was young—that his hand, in several former encounters, had proved so steady, that he never failed to hit the mark as he had intended. On these occasions he had not wished to inflict a mortal wound; but now the case was very different. It was necessary, for his own safety, that I should be cleared out of his way; however, if I would still give my word of honour not to mention his former life at Venice, he would look upon the dispute as at an end, and return amicably to the castle.

"Of course I refused his proposal. 'Then

make your peace with Heaven!' said he; and we prepared to fire. 'You shall have the first chance—it is your right, as I am challenger,' said he. I gave up my right, however, but he would not accept my offer. I fired, and shot the pistol out of his hand. This seemed to irritate him exceedingly—it was brought to him by the servant. He examined th lock, took a steady aim; but his rage became ungovernable when, having fired, he found that I was uninjured. He insisted that he ought to have shot me through the heart, and yet was obliged to allow that there had not been the slightest movement on my part, to which he could ascribe his failure. At his desire the contest was renewed, with precisely the same results, only that, as I took aim again at his pistol, which he held in his left hand, the ball did not pass without grazing and contusion. After he had missed for the second time, I declared that I would by no means proceed any farther,—that is to say, I would not again fire at him; but as he had perhaps failed from too great agitation, he might, for the third time, take aim at me if he were so disposed. But before he could answer this question, the Count and Libussa, whose sus-

picions had been roused, made their appearance close to us. The former complained heavily of our conduct; he insisted on an explanation, and in Marino's presence, I disclosed all that he had so much wished me to conceal. His visible embarrassment was imputed, by them also, to an evil conscience, and, for some time, every one seemed perplexed and discouraged.

"But it was not long before Marino contrived to profit so far by Libussa's unabated attachment, that the Count became once more influenced in his favour. In the evening he said to me, 'You are perfectly in the right—I should now play the part of a strict judge, and order the Duke to leave my house. But how should we console his forsaken bride, if she is never to see him again. Besides, he is the first and only individual in whose favour my daughter has evinced any prepossession; let us leave them, therefore, to take their own way. The Countess is of this opinion, and confesses that she could not help feeling some regret, if this handsome and agreeable Duke, to whose society we have been so long accustomed, should be turned out of doors, as I know you would advise. How many instances of inconstancy

happen in the world, which, perhaps, might be forgiven, if we knew the particular circumstances by which they were caused.'—'Nay,' said I, 'but it unluckily happens that the Duke seems to offer no excuse whatever for his conduct;' but I desisted from these suggestions, as I perceived that the Count was determined, at all hazards, to proceed with this alliance, from which I should have so gladly dissuaded him.

"After this rencontre, the betrothing was appointed without any new interruption; but at the festival, though there was no want of luxury and magnificence, yet the guests were far from being very cheerful or convivial. Even the ball in the evening did not seem to rouse their spirits; only Marino danced incessantly, and he alone seemed extravagant in his mirth. 'By good luck,' said he, as he passed me during a quadrille, and laughed aloud; 'by good luck, no ghost has come to interrupt our festival, as in your Venetian story!' —'Nay, nay,' said I, 'don't rejoice too soon my Lord Duke; misfortune comes on with cautious, noiseless steps. Often we know nothing of our danger, till it is already close upon us.' Contrary to my expectations, he did not venture to

answer one word; and it seemed to me a proof that my suggestions had made a deep impression, as he began to dance more furiously than ever. In vain the old Countess begged that he would have some regard for his health; only Libussa's earnest entreaties prevailed on him at last to sit down, when he was quite breathless and exhausted. Not long afterwards, I saw the bride glide gently out of the room, and, as I thought, tears were visibly glistening in her eyes. It was certainly Libussa; I could not be mistaken, for I stood as near her when she passed, as I now am to you, my Lady Countess. It struck me as remarkable, therefore, that she should return in a very few moments, with an expression of the utmost cheerfulness on her features. I followed her, and, with great surprise, observed, that on coming up to the bridegroom, she immediately led him out among the dancers, and instead of dissuading him as before, seemed to enter into their amusements with as much animation as he did. I observed, too, that after one waltz, the Duke went to bid his father-in-law and the Countess good night. They shook hands, and he retired with Libussa by a private door leading to their bed-room.

"While I was still perplexing myself, and considering in vain what could have produced the sudden change from sadness to gaiety in the bride's appearance, my attention was attracted by a whispering conversation that was carried on at the principal entrance, between the Count and the house steward. That the subject of their discourse must be somewhat of importance, was proved by the angry looks with which the former received the gardener, who now came in, and who seemed to be referred to by the steward as a witness of some extraordinary and unexpected event. I hastened up to them, resolved to know what was the cause of all this, and heard that the organ had been played, no one knew by whom, in the chapel, of which the windows also had been illuminated all the night till twelve o'clock, which was now just past. The Count was in the utmost degree indignant at this nursery fable, as he termed it, and inquired, if the facts were so, why he had not been summoned long before as a witness? The gardener declared that he had been afraid to mention it, and had contented himself with watching till the light disappeared. 'Besides,' added he, 'if I dare speak the truth, the old chaplain has

been visible again, and the cottagers on the wood have seen a great fire all evening on the hill top, and horrible figures dancing round it.'

"'Bravo!' cried the Count knitting his brows, 'these old fooleries are come once more all together on the carpet. I hope the spectre bride also, as she is called, will not fail to make her *entrée!*' The house steward here winked to the gardener, in order that he might not provoke his master any farther; but I interposed. 'At least, one may hear quietly what the good people suppose that they have seen. Friend,' added I to the gardener, 'what then is the story of the spectre bride?' The man shrugged his shoulders as if he wished to speak, but dared not. 'Did I not tell you,' said the Count, 'that we might hear about this also? In what form then has she thought proper to come among us now?' 'If I may be allowed to speak,' answered the gardener, 'the spectre bride passed by me only about half an hour ago in the garden. She had the figure and dress of the late Countess Hildegarde, and went, as I thought, into the castle.'—'Mark you, fellow,' said his master sternly; 'have some discretion for the future in your phantoms, and leave

my dear sainted daughter to rest in her tomb. For the rest, you may talk as it pleases you.' He waved his hand, and the two servants retired. 'Well, my dear Marquis,' said he, 'are you inclined to carry your usual faith so far as to believe also in this apparition of my Hildegarde?'—'At least,' answered I, 'it is not by the gardener alone that she has been seen. Think also of the scene in the picture gallery at Paris.'—'There you are in the right,' replied he; 'that was another admirable invention, of which, it must be owned, I do not yet well understand either the foundation or object. I can assure you, however, that I was much more inclined, at that time, to break off all connection with the Duke, because he had told us such a downright falsehood, than on account of his inconstancy which we afterwards discovered.'—'On that point,' said I, 'it seems impossible for us to agree; for, if you find my credulity unaccountable, your doubts appear to me no less so.'

"Meanwhile, the party began to retire for the night, till, by degrees, no one remained in the room but myself, with our host and hostess. What was our astonishment, therefore, when we saw Libussa in ball costume, enter, not from the bed-

room, but from the principal door, and look round her, astonished to find the scene so deserted. 'What can be the meaning of this?' said her mother; while the Count was so overcome with astonishment that he could not utter a word. 'Where is Marino?' said the bride. 'This question to *us*, dear child?' said the Countess; 'Did we not see you retire with him nearly an hour ago?'—'Impossible,' cried she; 'you are altogether mistaken.'—'Nay—nay—dearest Libussa,' answered her mother; 'just after that waltz, when you danced with so much spirit, you certainly went with him to your own apartments.'—'I have not danced this evening more than once,' said Libussa. 'Child—child,'—said her father sternly; 'to what purpose is this pretended forgetfulness?'—'I have not forgotten,' said Libussa; 'I can tell you all that has passed this night.'—'Where, then, have you staid away for this last hour?'—'In the rooms of my dear sister Hildegarde,' answered she; and I observed that the Count became somewhat pale at these words, and he looked at me doubtfully. He was silent, however, and the Countess, fearful that her beloved daughter's senses were wandering, said

in a mournful tone, ‘ Dearest child—on a day like this, how could such melancholy thoughts come into your mind?’—‘ For this,’ answered she, ‘ I cannot assign any proper cause—I only know that my heart became very much oppressed, and it seemed to me all of a sudden, that I had never till then felt so heavily the loss of my beloved Hildegarde. A strange delusion rose in my mind, and I could not help believing, that if I went to her room I should find her sitting, as in old times, with her guitar. I said nothing of this to any one, but glided out of the ball-room unobserved, and went up stairs.’—‘ Did you find her, then ?’—‘ Alas, no—but, when once in her apartments, I could not force myself again to leave them. I was wearied, sat down on a chair by the window—and knew not how the time passed, till, at last, I started up as if from sleep, and hastened hither.’—‘ How long, then, is it since you left the ball-room ?’ inquired her mother. ‘ At a quarter before twelve—the clock then struck as I entered my sister’s apartments.’—‘ Good Heaven, how can we explain this ? cried her mother ; ‘ what she has told us is so well connected, and yet, I know also that the clock struck

the last quarter to twelve just as I spoke to her in this room, and advised her not to dance so violently.'—' And where, think you, is Marino?' said her father. ' How can I tell? I had expected to find him here.'—' God have mercy,' said her mother ; ' she is indeed bewildered and insane, but where can the Duke be?'—' What means all this, dearest mother?' said Libussa, now alarmed in her turn, while the Count snatched up a light, and beckoned me to follow him. He led the way directly to the apartment that had been assigned to the newly married couple, and there a horrible sight awaited us. We found the Duke alone,—lying on the floor, his frame already rigid in death, and his visage frightfully distorted. You may imagine, though I cannot describe, the grief and distraction of Libussa, when intelligence was brought to her of this event, and the physicians declared that any attempt to restore animation must be in vain. Indeed, the whole family were thrown into such despair, that my presence could no longer be of any service ; it was impossible to console them ; and I was not sorry, when letters arrived, containing information that my presence was particularly required at my

own residence. Before setting out, however, I did not neglect to make all possible inquiries into the real history of the spectre bride. It must be confessed, however, that my evidence, depending on mere oral tradition, is not very full nor satisfactory. She is said to have been a young lady of rank in the fifteenth century, and to have been a native of the district in which stands the castle of my friend Count Globoda. It is alleged that she had been guilty of such cruel infidelity towards a young man, with whom she was once in love, that he died of grief. Afterwards, on her marriage night, his ghost appeared, claimed the lady, and her immediate death ensued; but the story runs on, not very consistently, that, since then, she has never rested in the grave, but has wandered through this world, assuming many different forms and aspects, in order to seduce lovers into a breach of their solemn vows and engagements. As it is impossible for her to wear the features of any living being, she invests herself in the frames of the dead, nor can she ever be released from her task, which forms the punishment of her own crimes, till she has found some youth whose fidelity resists all such endeavours.

As to the servant who attended her at Paris, that circumstance is inexplicable, unless it is supposed that the devil assists in lengthening the term of her sufferings, which is the more likely, as it seems that she has never yet made an attempt on any one who has not readily been misled. With regard to the old chaplain, I understood that he had been involved in the story, inasmuch as he had betrothed this formidable lady to her second lover, for whom the former had been so basely deserted. As to the Duke's name being called aloud, the midnight illumination of the church and the rest, no one could give me any satisfactory intelligence. Nor did the people venture to say by what means the fiery dance on the mountain had been caused, or what conclusions were to be drawn from it. However, you will perceive that this legend of the bridal spectre coincides admirably with both the stories which I have narrated; the beautiful Camilla may have had a near relation whose form was assumed and raised from the grave by the *revenante*, by whom, and not by the living heiress, Felippo may at first have been seduced. At all events, if such explanation will not suffice, I am unable to offer any better key.

Of the same spectre bride, there is another story, which I learned a few weeks ago, but I reserve it for another opportunity, as I have sufficiently monopolized *this* evening's conversation."

Just as he had thus concluded, and the party, though by no means inclined to believe all he had said, thanked him for the entertainment he had afforded, another member of the club suddenly entered the room, and whispered a few words to the Marquis, whose perfect composure contrasted very strangely with the fear and anxiety betrayed in the looks of the new-comer. "Make haste, I beseech you," cried the latter, seeming out of all patience at his indifference; "otherwise within a few hours, perhaps minutes, you will miserably repent your delay."—"I thank you for your kind interest in my concerns," answered the other; but seemed as little inclined to move as before, though the whole party prepared to separate for the night. "Now then—mark my words—you are a lost man," said his friend as an officer entered, attended by several followers, and inquired for the foreign Marquis, who immediately came forward and answered to his name. "You are my prisoner," said the officer; and, without a moment's hesitation,

the Marquis went with him, not however without politely wishing the company good-night, and begging that they would be under no anxiety on his account."—"No anxiety, forsooth!" said his friend, after the prisoner was removed; "it has been proved that he is connected with the most dangerous political associations, and his death may be looked upon as already doomed. Out of mere compassion I wished to apprise him of his danger, and, from his present conduct, must conclude that he is absolutely a madman."

The party continued for some time to indulge themselves in conjectures. But all of a sudden, the officer re-appeared, and inquired for his prisoner. "What mummery is this?" said one of the party, "did you not just now take him with you?"—"True, but he escaped, and we saw him return hither."—"No one has entered this room; of that you may be assured."—"Then he has vanished," said the officer laughing; "but we shall soon bring him to light again." The house was searched accordingly, from the garret to the cellar, but in vain; and next day the soldiers were obliged to take their departure, having been baffled completely in their enterprise.

THE CRYSTAL DAGGER.

THE CRYSTAL DAGGER.

CHAPTER I.

Several years ago, a considerable sensation was produced among the inhabitants of F——, a town in Pomerania, by the sudden death of the protestant clergyman there, a man rather of singular character, who, in his latter years, was possessed of a large fortune. This had accrued to him in consequence of divers chance occurrences, but more especially that of a will made by the widow of one of his earliest friends, and this friend had fallen the victim of a mysterious and horrid assassination. The clergyman left no children, but had many relations, of whom, though no one was in absolute want, yet the greater number lived in very narrow circumstances. On this account, the

astonishment and vexation of his family were indescribable, when they found, on opening the testament of the deceased, that his relations were passed over altogether, and by some most absurd caprice, he had been induced to leave the whole of his fortune to be expended in improvements on the public prisons, and contrivances to mitigate the sufferings of those who were confined therein. It was to be expected that a will of this kind must excite hatred and suspicion on the part of those who so confidently believed that they were provided for, and would receive good legacies. Had this been the case, they would doubtless have praised the clergyman as one of the best of men; but as the matter now stood, all his foibles and peculiarities were raked up, and talked of in such manner, that his memory might be held in the most odious light possible. They recollected the bitter expressions in which he was wont to indulge against the higher ranks of society,—even against personages of the most exalted character,—the contempt which he entertained for the existing rules and regulations of society; above all, his detestation of hereditary privileges, and the rights of chosen *castes*. The conclusions drawn from this

eccentricity were so formidable, that, if the clergyman (who was, in other respects, a most exemplary Christian) had been alive, the mere imputation of such doctrines and principles, at a time when the influence of the French revolution was in its zenith, would have, in all probability, deprived him both of his office and his personal liberty. But the hatred of his relations did not rest here. They went even so far as to ascribe to him a participation in the murder of that friend, to whose fate we have already alluded, although the whole tenor of his life had been utterly inconsistent with such horrible propensities.

Fortunately not for himself, indeed, to whom all such considerations must then have been indifferent, but for a few adherents to whom his memory was yet dear and sacred, there was found among his papers the written account of an extraordinary occurrence, which at once afforded a satisfactory explanation of the dark shades which had before appeared in his character, and silenced for ever the malignant calumnies of those who had dared to insinuate that he had been accessory to that frightful outrage. It was not, indeed, thought proper to publish the document, but its

import was soon spread abroad, and the malcontents were forced to retreat as well as they could from the station which they had assumed, affecting to laugh at the blunder of which they had been guilty. After an interval of years, no objection can be made to the circulation of this very singular record, which, it is to be hoped, will be read with some degree of interest, even by persons wholly unacquainted with the clergyman and his connections.

THROUGH the last twenty years of my life [so the good priest commences his story] it has been my practice to keep a diary of events as they have occurred; but, in every volume of the Journal, I have written on the guard leaf, the words "to be burned without being perused by any one." Some chapters, however, deserve to be excepted from this rule; at least the circumstances to which I am now to allude should not be forgotten. I have, therefore, taken the trouble to transcribe about fifty pages, striking out many of my own remarks, and confining myself as much as possible to a mere historical abstract.

After I had settled as the clergyman of this

parish, I felt often a melancholy pleasure in recalling my youthful impressions; I thought especially of the happy years which I had spent in the town of D——, where I had, indeed, lived on a very slender income, yet had the good fortune to secure many kind and sympathizing friends. On this account, whenever the newspaper was laid on my tea-table, I used, in the first place, to glance over the heads of its leading paragraphs, in hopes that I might find some intelligence from my old favourite town. It was with great satisfaction, therefore, that I once observed a long passage, commencing with the date D——, September 21st 17—; but my gladness was instantly changed to regret and horror when I read what here follows:—"Our whole community has been thrown into the utmost consternation, by an event, such, as in our peaceful district, was, till now, perfectly unexampled. One of our most respectable and prosperous townsmen, the well-known and worthy state-counsellor von S——, was last night murdered at his own house. This dreadful crime has been attended with circumstances which are almost incredible, and will not admit even of conjectural explanation. Our lamented

friend, who was so much esteemed as a faithful public officer, a hospitable landlord, and kind husband, after he had yesterday evening seen his lady into the carriage, which was to convey her on a visit to the capital, shut himself about ten o'clock into a study adjoining his bedroom, intending to write for some time undisturbed, and ordered his servants to retire to rest. But this morning, when his old valet went at an appointed hour to the room, he found to his astonishment that the bed had not been used, and his master was not to be seen either here or in the study. His hat and stick were in the usual place; the house door and garden door were fast bolted from within. But, quite aware that some disaster had occurred, the man got several of his fellow servants about him, and along with them went through the apartments. Their horror exceeded all power of description, when on opening that of the lady, who had taken her departure on the preceding night, they found the floor covered with blood, and their master's body in his full dress, lying across the bed. It was observed that the lock of the secretaire in this room had been forced open. On the floor, not far from the

body, lay a broken dagger with an ivory handle of curious workmanship, and near the secretaire was the counsellor's gold watch, which had been trod upon. The hand stood at one o'clock. On the body was visible a single wound on the breast, which must have struck immediately to the heart. No trace whatever has yet been found that could identify the perpetrators of this horrid deed ; only, some of the law-officers maintain, that the dagger belongs to a cabinet of curiosities in the prince's summer-palace, and though not yet inquired for, it must have been taken from thence. No doubt the lady's absence might sanction a conjecture that some villains had availed themselves of the opportunity to commit depredations on the uninhabited apartments—but, for this reason, it is the more inexplicable that no property whatever seems to have been stolen. It remains also a complete riddle how the unfortunate victim should be put to death in that room, for there is no proof in the house of any doors having been broke open.

" Meanwhile, a courier has been despatched to the unhappy widow, and we look anxiously for her return, in hopes that some information may be ob-

tained to guide our law-officers in ascertaining the real cause of this frightful and overpowering catastrophe."

The paper dropped from my hand; I was quite overcome by this intelligence, for I had been in former years intimately acquainted with the counsellor. His first wife had been my niece, and though I had only seen the other once or twice at chance meetings, and she knew little of me, yet, from the effect of early habits in their house, I was always called there old uncle Michael. I could not think, without great emotion, of the confidence he had reposed in my friendship, which, from many letters that I had received, seemed by no means abated. However, it was impossible to say that, from my own conviction, I was prepared to join in the eulogium bestowed on him in the newspaper; for I had remarked that, when his guests quitted the house, his character of a jovial kind landlord was very soon lost, his smiling demeanour was exchanged for a look of sulky meditation; his ill humour terrified the servants, and an intolerable jealousy, even of his first wife, always betrayed itself when he was left *en famille*. My niece could not boast of much beauty nor youthful bloom, and

as his second wife had both qualities in an eminent degree, I could not doubt that his temper and conduct with regard to her would be more capricious than ever.

I determined immediately on writing a letter to the president of the criminal court at D——. He also was an acquaintance of mine, a strictly honest, but severe man, who did not want for acuteness, but was totally destitute of those higher gifts of sensibility and benevolence, without which the mere exercise of the law, according to the letter, becomes often very inconsistent with equity and abstract justice. I could so far depend on him, however, that I was convinced he would send a faithful narrative of every circumstance which I was now most desirous to know, and, accordingly, by return of post, I received a concise statement in his clerk's hand-writing, with a few lines added by himself. He appeared to think nearly as I did with regard to the character of the deceased,—and mentioned that the writer of the newspaper column had been induced to frame an elaborate eulogium, for the sake of overpowering a report then prevalent, that the counsellor had put an end to his own life. His object, however, was not

gained, for the disconsolate widow seemed indirectly to sanction that conclusion, affirming that she herself had removed all her jewels, and every article of value from the secretaire, so that thieves could have no temptation in that room. She was extremely agitated when the dagger was produced in her presence, but denied that she had ever seen it before, ascribing her emotion to that horror which she could not help feeling at the murderous weapon that was yet stained with her husband's blood. Most people, however, seemed dissatisfied with this explanation; but their suspicions that she had known and recognised the dagger were soon overpowered. It is proved that it must have been stolen from the Prince's museum, but *when* or *in what manner* are questions not so easily resolved. The keeper can only say that, some months ago, there were certain carpenters at work in an anti-room adjoining to the museum, and that they had been there at hours when it was open to the visits of strangers.

In the secretaire nothing was found of any consequence but old papers, among which the widow seemed, with visible disquietude, to search for some that she had expected to find, and which are now

wanting. What these were, she has not explained, nor has given any direct answer with regard to a rumour floating through the town, that a vehement dispute between the husband and wife preceded the sudden departure of the latter.

"There is one occurrence," added the judge, "which I cannot help noticing, as, although trifling in itself, it may lead to important consequences. Yesterday, at the funeral procession, when the coffin, which was carried on men's shoulders, turned round the corner of our late friend's house, and had reached the commencement of the garden wall, one of the bearer's happened to stumble over a raised slab of pavement, which projects into the narrow street, and forms the threshold of an iron wicket leading into the garden. The procession was suddenly stopped, and the coffin must have fallen to the ground had not one of the opposite bearers dexterously given it a push sideways, so that it rested for a moment on the trellis-work of the gate, and a fragment of the velvet pall was left adhering to one of the iron spikes. The whole was an affair of a few seconds, and the procession went on without farther interruption. This accident, however, induced the

mourners to look at the iron gate with some attention, and our clerk of the criminal court observed a small private door, coloured to look like stone, in a back wall of the house, partly covered with fruit trees, and joining with the garden.

"This discovery seemed to him very remarkable, and he mentioned it to me immediately. After the funeral, therefore, I returned to the late counsellor's house, that I might question his widow on the circumstance. She seemed to be surprised that no one had observed this before, and pointed out to me, in the cabinet adjoining to her bedroom, a tapestry door, which leads into a long narrow passage, ending in a flight of steps down to the garden. The old servant assured me that this private entrance, for a long time past, was never used, and had therefore been forgotten. The widow made me observe that the bolt of the garden door was still fastened on the inside, but, on examination, I found that it was very easily moved backwards and forwards, which did not correspond well with the servant's assertion of its being never used. I observed, too, a small, perhaps accidental, rent in the wood, by means of which it might be very possible to draw the bolt from the

outside, but I made no remark on this to the bystanders.

"One consequence of this accidental discovery is, that the imputation of suicide, which had been so prevalent in town, begins gradually to be withdrawn, while the superstitious insist that the dead man had moved in his coffin, and by this means directly led to the discovery of most important proofs. I am not sorry that this conclusion has been deduced, for every one who knew the deceased must be perfectly aware, that he who enjoyed so much the luxuries of this world, and who had it in his power to gratify every wish, must be among the last persons in the world to think of committing self-murder."

I was precisely of the judge's opinion, though on very different grounds; and had begun to console myself with the reflection, that time, which clears up all such mysteries, would here also exert its usual influence, when a second letter arrived from the same hand. This dispatch informed me, that, among the papers of the deceased, there had been found a will made several years ago, (and dated from the time at which I held my situation as clergyman at D——,) wherein he had especial-

ly named me as an executor. There was, besides, merely a codicil, added after his second marriage, making provision for his wife. The president begged that I would reflect on the duties involved in this nomination, and that I should, if possible, obtain some weeks leave of absence, as my presence at D—— was in many respects important and desirable. He added that the widow had fallen into a state of mind by which all her friends were exceedingly perplexed and alarmed. Her grief was increased by scandalous reports as to the terms on which she had lived with her late husband, by means of which the rumour of his having committed suicide once more began to gain ground, especially among the higher classes of society.

People now insisted that the deceased, after his second marriage, had been incited to vehement paroxysms of jealousy, which seemed not without reason, on account of the frequent visits of the crown Prince Gustave Benno at his house; consequently he had many violent altercations with his wife, which had produced bitterness and rancour on both sides. Now, this prince was by no means young nor amiable; in his person, more-

over, he was somewhat deformed, so that one could not suppose him likely to gain the affections of a young and handsome woman, who, in her own domestic sphere, had so much reason to be contented. It was, however, a considerable bribe to female vanity, that through the whole of the preceding winter, the Prince had, contrary to all established custom, given up his brother's court, and chosen for his abode the summer-palace at D——. This flattery might have induced her to show some indulgence towards his highness, which, perhaps, in the estimation of an irritable husband, had appeared in a light improper and inexcusable.

"So much," continued the judge, "is quite certain, that the Prince was very often at their house, and it is insisted on that his last visit there was the cause of the lady's being sent all of a sudden to the capital. Her excessive depression of spirits, though her temper used formerly to be very cheerful, seems to have some deeper cause than her husband's death. It has been noticed also as unaccountable, that the Prince's attentions have now ceased altogether, so that he has not even

once driven up to the door in order to pay his respects, and express his condolence after the funeral.

"From all these circumstances, most people are again inclined to draw the conclusion that the counsellor was a suicide, and, in the widow's extreme grief, they see only the effects of a guilty and restless conscience, which accuses her of having led him on to that terrible deed. I myself," added the president, "am not left free from scandalous imputations, for people look upon my zeal, which is no more than official duty, as a mask cunningly put on to save the reputation of a man with whom I associated, and at whose house I was often entertained. All this vexes me exceedingly, but I am not diverted from the path which I ought strictly to pursue, and I swear, that not the slightest suspicion which arises against any one shall be passed over."

Here the letter had been broken off abruptly, but with the date of the next day, the following paragraphs were subjoined.

"Yesterday, when I was about to close my letter, a circumstance occurred which seems to afford us some glimmer of light, but so feeble and

uncertain, that it may perhaps be lost again immediately. My wife came into my room to remind me of a birth-day present, which it was my duty to make, and in order to provide for this I went directly to my jeweller. While I was there looking over various articles, there came an old poorly-dressed woman into the shop, and offered to the proprietor a small piece of silver for sale. He took it into his hands for examination, and accidentally I looked at it also. It was a roughly-made silver shirt button, and it occurred to me that I had somewhere or other seen a pair of the same description. On farther reflection, I remembered that I had observed, at least, one of the same kind in a corner of the secretaire at the widow's house, where it had lain amid a confusion of papers, and attracted my attention, only on account of the rough workmanship, which contrasted strangely with the almost finical elegance for which the counsellor had been distinguished.

" I made a sign to the jeweller that he should be on his guard, and under the pretext that he had not time to examine it properly then, he desired her to return in the evening, when he would be ready to pay the value of the silver. When

she was gone, I made him give me the shirt button, and hastened with it directly to the house of the widow, who accompanied me into the fatal chamber, which I had sealed up after my first search. Of course, therefore, the button lay in the secretaire where I had left it, and corresponded so exactly with the other which I had brought from the jeweller's, that it was impossible to doubt of their having belonged originally to the same person. The widow affirmed, however, that she had never seen either of them before, and could not even conjecture how such a thing had found its way into the secretaire.

"I promised to inform her, as soon as possible, if any important results followed this discovery, and, in the evening, betook myself to the jeweller. The old woman soon made her appearance, and on my question, how that silver button had come into her possession, she looked at me suspiciously, and after some hesitation, answered that she had found it. 'But when and where?' said I in my deepest voice, for I wished to terrify her, and succeeded. She began to weep; protested her perfect innocence of any theft, but would afford no clear and decided answer. I gave orders

that she should be arrested, and kept in confinement till she spoke more unreservedly; and, on farther inquiry, learned that she was, by trade, a washerwoman, and had been employed also at a paper manufactory. In a few hours I am to have her examined again, but I must entreat that you will make the requisite arrangements, and come hither to my assistance as soon as possible."

I prayed fervently that my friend's endeavours might be successful, so that the imputed guilt of suicide might no longer stain the once fair reputation of the unfortunate counsellor, and, in hopes that I might alleviate the grief and perplexity of the widow, I obtained leave of absence from my own duties, set out on my journey, and in less than three weeks beheld once more the well-known church towers of D——.

CHAPTER II.

Though I was quite aware that the lady had provided apartments for me in her own house, yet I thought it more suitable for my purpose to take up my quarters at an inn. On alighting, I wished to have recourse instantly to my correspondent the judge; but when, with this intention, I drew near the square of the town-house, I found a great mob of people assembled at the door of that building, and on my inquiring what was the matter, one of them answered—"The crowd are looking at the new dungeon that has been prepared for the murderer of the late State Counsellor von S——."—"So, then," exclaimed I, quite rejoiced; "the villain has been discovered?"—"It is said so," answered the man; "and, of course, there must be some important proofs against this fellow, otherwise the judge would not have adopted such rigid measures. Yet he is a fine hand-

some youth, and methinks it might have been time enough to put him thus under ground when he had confessed, or been regularly found guilty, which is not yet the case."

These last words made me shudder ; but, good Heavens, how was I distressed and agitated, when, in a few moments, I saw the criminal brought from the watch-house, (where he had been formerly kept,) in order to be secured in his new prison ! One flitting glance at his tall graceful figure, his pale features and dark eyes that were now lifted up in prayer, enabled me to recognise in him Herman Rose, my own favourite pupil, to whom I had given instruction both in religion and the elementary branches of education, and who had been confirmed by me about seven years before. I stood quite confounded, gazing at the unfortunate youth, as he was lowered into the vault, almost like a dead body into the tomb ; and instead of rejoicing as before at the discovery of the murderer, I felt myself changed all at once into a partisan of the individual now accused.

As soon as I recovered from this shock, I hastened, as if my insignificant presence could have arrested the stern progress of justice, to the house

of my correspondent, whose zeal now seemed to me far too vehement and officious. "We have caught the murderer!" cried he with great eagerness, and before he had bestowed on me one word of customary salutation. "The murderer!" said I, "Herman Rose? It seems to me incredible."—"You know, then, already?"—"I saw and recognised him at the moment when he was led into that horrid prison."—"Hah! that was quite right;—I am glad that he is removed thither, and will not escape from us another time so easily. "Of course, then," said I, "his crime has been *proved?*"—"Not yet completely, but that will soon follow—only let me take my own way."—"His crime is not proved," replied I; "and yet you can reconcile it to your own feelings ——." I paused abruptly, for the cold sternness of the man froze, as it were, the very power of utterance. I resolved that I would, in the first place, listen to all that could be said on the judge's side of the question, and afterwards use, in behalf of the unfortunate youth, such endeavours as the law and my own conscience left within my power.

The president, who saw my impatience, and had other business to attend, now referred me to

his secretary, a polite young man, who seemed just as compassionate in disposition as I was myself, and read aloud the different examinations, commenting on them with a degree of sympathy and animation which was certainly not according to the strict letter of the law. On her first hearing, the old woman had confessed that she had obtained the silver button from a cabinet maker's apprentice, named Herman Rose, several months ago. She had not offered it for sale then, partly because her money was not quite exhausted, and partly because she hoped to find the companion button, which Herman said that he must have lost in her apartment. To the question why she had not freely explained all this, when first examined, she replied, after much hesitation, that she had been afraid to mention the circumstance; but Herman Rose had made her a present of this button, in recompense for her having read to him his own and his wife's fortune, though such divination was by the law strictly forbidden. Hereupon the woman was led back to prison; an order was given for the young carpenter's arrestment; and, meanwhile, every possible inquiry

carried on as to his former conduct and character.

These investigations turned out almost invariably to his advantage. His master and comrades were eager to bear testimony in his favour, adding, that, if he had any fault, it was that of being sometimes rather discontented with his lot in the world. He complained of poverty, and of his hard fate in remaining a journeyman, instead of being able to set up as a tradesman on his own account. Lately, notwithstanding this, he had ventured on marriage, but his neighbours observed, that he by no means lived on such good terms with his young and handsome wife as might been expected, for he was frequently absent from his own house, by which means he, of course, excited jealousy on her part. It was proved also that he had been employed as a workman at the prince's summer-palace, and also at the house of the unfortunate counsellor. This was enough to keep up the suspicions that had been already excited.

Herman and his wife was, therefore, called directly into court, and, along with them, the for-

tune-teller was brought up for re-examination. The young man seemed tranquil in his demeanour, but, at the same time, wore a very thoughtful look. He and his wife confirmed, without the slightest hesitation, what had been stated before. He recognised the silver button for his own, adding, that because he had first missed one of them at the fortune-teller's house, he thought that the other had been lost there; now he perceived that this must have happened in the bed-room of the counsellor's lady, where he had been employed on some alterations in the secretaire. How the button could be found in the inside of the writing-desk, however, he was unable to comprehend, and if it had occurred to him that he had lost it in that manner, he would not have desired the old woman to look for it in her habitation. At the same time, it seemed possible enough, that if any one in the counsellor's house found a bit of silver, it might be locked up without knowing from whence it had come.

He paused here, and seemed to expect that he would now obtain his dismissal, when the judge suddenly removed from the table a cloth which covered the murderous weapon,—the dagger that

had been found along with the dead body—and asked Rose abruptly whether he knew anything of it? He seemed disconcerted by the question, yet answered firmly in the negative. "Yet you change colour?" said the judge. "It may be so," he replied; "I have been frequently employed by the late worthy counsellor, and it is surely natural to expect that I might shudder at the sight of that weapon which caused his death."—"No doubt," said the judge, looking sternly at the prisoner, "especially when one marks, with attention, this motto." He then read aloud, in a deep solemn tone, the words which were inscribed in black letter on the ivory hilt of the dagger.

"Two inches and a half complete—
The stricken heart will cease to beat."

No sooner had the judge pronounced this rhyme, than the eyes of every one were turned with horror on the carpenter's wife, who, with the exclamation "God have mercy on us!" clasped her hands, and sank fainting on the floor. Her husband was greatly distressed, and wished to assist her, but the attending officers prevented him. "At least," said he, "I must be allowed to explain this circumstance." It was thought impro-

per, however, that he should be permitted to speak at this time, and in spite of his earnest, almost agonized entreaties, he was led out of the audience-hall. As soon as his wife had recovered from her fainting fit, both she and the fortune-teller, on whom also the words seemed to have made a deep impression, were most strictly examined, and a confession was extorted from them, which, deducting a few inconsistencies, was in import nearly what here follows: —

Several months ago, before Herman's marriage, his bride persuaded him to accompany her to the house of the old woman, who, as she believed, could predict exactly whatever changes of fortune awaited them in this world, promising, that if he would humour her inclination for this once, and the predictions should not be unfavourable, she would no longer object to an immediate marriage, nor to go with him, as he now proposed, to reside in a distant town beyond the frontiers. Accordingly, he agreed to her request, and the wise woman, perceiving that he was inclined to hold her pretended art in great contempt, tried every stratagem to raise her character in his estimation. After he had listened with incredulous, almost

scornful looks to her prophecies,—which were read to his wife out of the dregs of a coffee-cup, she proposed to him that he should scratch his wrist with a bodkin, and let some drops of blood fall on a hot iron shovel, asserting that his future fortune would be clearly revealed by what then appeared on the metal. His bride was terrified, and would not listen to this suggestion. Herman, however, did not wait for her consent, but immediately stripped up his sleeve, laughing aloud at such absurdity, and cut himself, slightly with a knife. "Here is blood enough," said he; "how much would you have?"—"Only two drops and a half," answered the woman.

These words seemed to disconcert him, and with a solemn emphasis, as he let the blood drop according to her directions, he said,

"Two inches and a half complete—
The stricken heart will cease to beat."

"It is my left hand," added he; "you have here a small share of my life's blood; it flows directly from the heart."—"What strange fancies are these?" exclaimed his bride in astonishment. Indeed, his words and manner made such an impression on her, that, for a long time

afterwards, when alone, she could not help repeating over and over the same mysterious rhyme. "Just as I was on the point of securing my worldly happiness," answered he with a sigh, "these accursed verses fell in my way, and all my hopes were blighted. Now then, good woman, read on, and let us hear if you can promise me a better chance for the future."—"What then did you announce to him?" said the judge? "His fortune as it lay visibly before me," replied the old woman; "I promised him that unlooked-for good luck and great danger just then awaited him. I am afraid, that, in both respects, my words have already been verified." Herman, she added, had missed the sleeve-button immediately after this prophecy had been uttered, and, in spite of her diligent search, it could not then be recovered. "Shortly afterwards, added the young woman; "it seemed, in truth, as if fortune had been inclined to favour my husband. He obtained large sums of money; so much, indeed, that he was able to set up in business on his own account, and maintain his wife; though whence these treasures were derived, I am not able to explain." Sometimes he spoke of having received a small

inheritance, and of a friend that had been willing to assist him; but, however this might be, she was absolutely convinced that Herman could not have appropriated to himself money that was dishonestly come by. The warmth and anxiety with which these words were pronounced, seemed completely to contradict that rumour which had been spread abroad of a misunderstanding between the wife and husband.

The two female witnesses were now withdrawn, and, in consequence of their deposition, the carpenter's lodgings were searched, but not the slightest trace of any suspicious evidence was therein discovered. He was, himself, brought again into court, and being questioned as to what passed at the fortune-teller's house, repeated the same story, almost word for word as I have set it down. "It is proved, however," said the judge, "that you already knew the dagger?"—"I have said before, that I know nothing of it," answered he coolly. "By what means, then, could you repeat the inscription on the handle?"—"I might as well ask," replied he, "how it comes to bear such an inscription, for I have known that rhyme even from my childhood."—"But how could such

verses be said to blight your hopes, and injure your worldly fortune?"—"I cannot explain this," answered he, "and know not to what you allude." He was then interrogated where he had acquired money to establish himself in business, and to fit up his house, which questions excited him to great indignation. "Am I, then, accused of theft?" said he; "Whoever has ventured to utter such an infamous calumny, let him step forward personally, and be answered. But since what time has it been the law, that an honest citizen, against whom no charge of guilt is established, should be bound to render an account of his private resources for the support of himself and his household?" He wished to retire, but it was intimated to him that he was still a prisoner. "On what charge, and to what purpose?" said he, turning pale, and visibly confounded. "To what purpose?" repeated the judge; "because we must ascertain, in the first place, how the silver shirt-button came into the secretaire; secondly, how you became acquainted with that inscription on the dagger which was taken from the Prince's palace, where you have been employed as a workman, and which dagger afterwards was the instrument used for a

horrid murder; above all, to whom you are indebted for the means of your sudden rise in the world."—"In God's name," answered he resolutely; "I have declared only the truth, and cannot speak otherwise, nor am I bound to render any farther explanations."

He was then removed to the guard-house. At every succeeding trial he remained steadfast to the same deposition, and people despaired of being able to lead him on any farther. So the matter rested, till one morning it was most unexpectedly announced, that, during the night, Herman Rose had made his escape! The police of D—— were very active however, and succeeded in apprehending him before he had got across the frontier. He was dressed differently, and much better than he had been formerly, and there was found on his person an embroidered purse, containing fifty *louis d'ors*. His flight, and the money thus found on him, not only corroborated the proofs already entertained of his own guilt, but seemed also to establish beyond doubt that he had powerful and ingenious accomplices. Notwithstanding all this, his answers on trial were as unsatisfactory as ever, and his wife denied having seen

him on the night when he effected his escape. To the question why he had run away, if he were conscious of his innocence? he answered, "Because you seemed wholly bent on my destruction. I have always spoken the truth, but am not believed, and you might hold me for years imprisoned in the same manner. If an unfortunate man is dependent for his fate, not on the laws of the land, but on the humours and caprice of others, then surely it is full time that he should try, by such means as are in his own power, to gain his liberty."

By these answers, the judges were excessively provoked; and, on this account, as well as from the insecurity of the watch-house, they were led to the resolution of preparing for the criminal that subterraneous prison into which I happened to see him conducted. Severe as those proceedings must be considered, it cannot be denied that the president had some reason on his side, for not only was the captive prevented from any new attempt to recover his liberty, but the terrors that such a prison, with its damp walls, darkness, and loneliness, would inspire—the sickness, too, with which he would, in all probability, be attacked,

might greatly assist their plans of extorting from him a confession. I resolved to call my friend to account for this harshness, however, at the first fitting opportunity,—and this occurred the very day after my arrival, which I spent with him at dinner alone. "Well," said he, when the dessert was set on the table, and the servant had withdrawn, "what is your opinion of that obstinate and perverse criminal?"—"You must excuse me, my worthy friend," said I, "if I confess freely, that the measures last adopted against him have distressed me exceedingly. There are circumstances extant which, indeed, justify our darkest and strongest suspicions, but there are no *proofs* to sanction such rigid measures as would have been used, had he been already convicted. Regard for public safety—for the commonweal, demands that he should be carefully watched, and kept in confinement; but we are Christians—at least we call ourselves such—and it is not just that any fate so like an absolute punishment should be inflicted on an unhappy youth, who may be a malefactor, or as innocent as we are who now sit here. The truth is yet to be proved."—"There spoke the reverend pastor!" said my friend; "but you

should remember that you are not now in the pulpit."—"Nay, nay," said I; "you should rather say it was the *man* who spoke, and who cannot help sympathizing with a brother in distress. It is needless for me to repeat what you already know, that I was well acquainted with Herman Rose, and I looked on him always as a well-behaved pious young man, whose manners, as well as appearance, were much superior to what could have been expected from one of his humble rank. Doubtless he may have been guilty of errors, for which his time of life and inexperience perhaps afford some excuse; but he must have been exposed to great and unexampled temptations, if he has fallen so deeply as to deserve treatment which could, in my opinion, scarcely be allowable in the instance of the most abandoned villain. Besides, to say the truth, an inward voice always recurs in my mind, which pronounces him free from this horrible charge of murder. His calm self-possessed demeanour is by no means that of an assassin; and do not all witnesses that are worthy of being listened to testify in his favour? As to the calumnies uttered against him, he shares in this respect only the usual fate of the fallen and unfor-

tunate. But I shall leave his character out of the question altogether, and only beg of you to explain how you can reconcile to your own feelings of equity and justice, the use of tortures which only do not bear this name, because, alas ! in our enlightened Europe, they are employed almost by every tribunal. According to my firm conviction, such punishment as inflicts not only corporeal but mental sufferings can be allowed only after judgment has been pronounced,—when its effects can last but a short time, and may, perhaps, in a religious view, prove for the benefit of the penitent sufferer. Let us reflect, too, that when an imputation (like that of murder) is, in its own nature, such as to exclude the accused from the society of his fellow-creatures, every infliction of bodily pain ceases to be mere punishment—it is more like revenge, which, for the law, is both unbecoming and unworthy. And what revenge can be more cruel than that of a changeless, dark, and solitary prison, where the unhappy mortal beholds no glimmer of light, hears no sounds but the clanking of his own chains, and has no living creatures near him but the reptiles and vermin by whom he is perhaps devoured ? It is a foolish weakness under which people are afraid

to pronounce sentence of death, while they do not hesitate to doom a forlorn wretch to perhaps thirty years' imprisonment and suspense. What crime, indeed, is great enough to warrant such treatment as this, to which death would, in comparison, be a lenient and merciful sentence?" "You paint with too powerful colours," said the judge; "recollect that Rose escaped from us once, —this alone justified the severity with which he has been treated."—"The law has authorized your severity doubtless," said I; "but is the prisoner in reality more guilty than before, because, for once, he could not resist an impulse of the most natural and imperious feelings that are implanted in the heart of man? At the same time, the gaoler, or sentinel, whose duty it was to keep watch, and prevent the possibility of escape, is passed over without punishment. Such regulations are indeed horrible. Every one must feel that self-preservation is a duty, therefore a prisoner must take refuge in flight if he has the means of effecting this purpose; and should the guards neglect their duty, and allow him to escape, he ought not to suffer merely that they

may be protected in their indolence and inattention."

We kept up this dispute for a long time, but, of course, my arguments had but little influence. All I could gain was my friend's promise that he would hurry on a final trial as fast as possible, though he was quite incapable of feeling, on this occasion, the force of that Christain aphorism, "it were better that ten guilty persons should be set at liberty, than that a single innocent man should suffer." Another examination took place immediately, and the judge, though he carefully suppressed his own feelings in public, seemed greatly incensed when he described to me afterwards how obstinately the prisoner had still refused to give any account how the money that had been found on him had come into his possession, and had exclaimed, "Is there any one in this town that has lost property, and suspects it to have been stolen? Only let my accuser be confronted with me, and I shall soon find means to silence his malicious insinuations." At last, however, as if tired out and irritated by the cross-questioning, he said, "Well, then, if I must answer, the truth is, I found a treasure." At the same time his

countenance changed as if he were conscious that he uttered a falsehood. "This refractory spirit," added the judge, "is quite intolerable, and you must agree with me at last, that every possible means must be adopted for its being tamed."—"Nay," said I; "every persecuted creature defends its own life as well as may be. The faint efforts of despairing weakness should not provoke those who wield in their calmness the sceptre of power."—"By-the-bye," said the president, "you have the means of rendering me assistance. We have spoken hitherto but little of the unhappy widow. She suffers dreadfully during these examinations. Every new discovery affects her, because she cannot bear the idea, even of the greatest criminal suffering on the scaffold. I have explained to her in vain the absolute necessity of our proceedings, and I perceive plainly, that my visits are by no means welcome at her house. I wish, therefore, that you would propose for me one question, which may perhaps lead to important results. Our secretary, who has minutely observed the *louis d'ors* which were found on the culprit, believes that he has seen one of them before, and could prove that he paid it to the lady

at a card-table, a short time before the murder was committed. It is identified by this circumstance, that the coin, though newly stamped, has a curious mark on the king's face, which, as one of the company remarked at the time, rather improved than injured the likeness. Ask the widow, then, whether she can recollect this circumstance, and show her the coin. Here it is ——."

I lost no time in fulfilling this commission. The lady, who was visibly in declining health and deeply afflicted, received me with unaffected kindness, and begged that she might be allowed to call me uncle, as her husband had been wont to do; "for," added she, "I am now so lonely in the world, that even the mere appearance, though this were all, of having a relative, is some consolation." Her looks were so humble and melancholy, that, though she was still both young and handsome, I completely dismissed from my mind whatever impressions the scandalous reports of the town might have made; and when she urged the request, that I would come to reside in her house, I did not hesitate to accept her proposal. Her distress was evidently not assumed in compliance with custom, to attract attention from others,—

and I could not forget that it was my professional duty to offer support and admonition to the mourner.

After we had conversed for some time, though not without reserve and embarrassment on both sides, I delivered the judge's message, and showed her the *louis d'or*, which she looked at attentively. "I do not understand," said she, "to what new argument this can lead; for, supposing that it were the same piece of money, which can scarcely be proved, yet it is a long while since I paid away what was then won at cards, and who can tell through how many different hands it may have passed since that time?" I could not but allow the truth of this remark; indeed, my favourable opinion of her was every moment increased by the mild resignation with which she encountered her misfortune, and her dislike to run the risk of dragging to the scaffold one who was perhaps wholly innocent, for she joined even in my prepossessions, and could not bring herself to believe that Herman Rose, whom she had often seen when he was employed as a carpenter in her house, was the murderer of her husband. "Heaven be praised," she exclaimed, "that you, dear uncle,

have thus come among us, for you can take measures, and afford suggestions which, on my part, would be misinterpreted. Entreat the president, therefore, to beware lest, in the fervour of his zeal, he should overstep the bounds of strict justice and impartiality." I promised that I would continue to exert myself to the utmost for this purpose, but she seemed gradually to relapse into the deepest melancholy, and scarcely listened afterwards to what I said.

CHAPTER III.

A LONG interval now elapsed, which the judge considered indispensably requisite, in order that the terrors and pains of imprisonment should force the criminal to confession. At last, another hearing was appointed. Much paler than before, and seemingly feeble in health, yet resolute as ever, Herman Rose made his appearance. "We were in hopes," said the judge somewhat ironically; "that, after the time that has been allowed you for recollection, we should hear a plainer statement than you gave last at the bar."—"By all means," said he in a calm determined manner; "I see plainly enough that I am aimed at and marked out as a victim, that, whether my guilt were or were not proved, I must remain in prison and suffer a lingering death. Well, that the matter may come to an end at once, I did take the money, and I did observe the dagger. Both

lay together in the secretaire."—" Why did you not confess this before?"

" You would not have believed me had I spoken the mere truth, and I shall not yet be believed; this was evident to me from the commencement."—" Let us hear farther."—" Several months ago, when I was yet a journeyman, I was ordered to look over the furniture in the late counsellor's house, and to make some repairs. One day, (it was the same on the evening of which I went with my bride to the fortune-teller,) I was employed to polish, with wax, the secretaire so often alluded to. During this work, I felt very melancholy and discontented. ' Alas!' thought I to myself, ' if but a very small share of the wealth which has been, and perhaps now lies within these pannels, were in *my* possession, how happy, beyond all bounds, would'st thou become! Thou could'st, at once, begin business, independent of any master; thou could'st marry the girl on whom thy affections are placed, and all distress would come to an end!' Whilst I was reflecting in this manner, and rubbed very hard on the wood to make it bright, the lock had been so much shaken by my efforts that it started open. This

accident appeared to me like a supernatural warning what I should do; for many drawers full of jewels and money shone most invitingly before me. As for the lock, I perceived that it was uninjured, and that I could close it again as well as ever; but, through my whole life, I have never felt such terror as at that moment. Then, by chance, my looks fell on the crystal dagger with the ivory hilt. I took it into my hand from mere curiosity, and read the frightful inscription. Thus it seemed as if a drawn sword—the weapon of an avenger, came betwixt me and the crime which I was about to commit. Or rather a tablet of commandments and admonition had been placed before me, and I had read from it the words—' Now art thou brought to the uttermost verge,—scarce a hair's breadth is betwixt thee and the commission of deadly irretrievable sin!' I trembled violently, laid back the dagger, and closed the lock. But fate would have it that my sleeve-button should fall into the secretaire, in order that all this evil should come upon me. Afterwards I had resolution to finish my task quietly, without any farther temptation."—

" Thou liest, however ;" said the judge sternly. " Have I not said already that you would not believe me ? And yet it is in my power, if I were inclined, to bring *one witness* who could prove that I have spoken the truth."—" A witness ? Give his name then directly." The prisoner's lips quivered ; he seemed agitated by some inward conflict, then answered in a low murmuring tone, " God is my witness !" and lifted up his clasped hands, appealing to Heaven.

This very simple deposition, however, and the unaffected demeanour of the accused, did not fail to make an impression on the audience. Even the president was moved by these last words, and remained for a few moments silent. At last, recovering self-possession, he said in his usual angry tone, " But the money—the fifty *louis d'ors* which you have doubtless stolen ?" Herman grew paler than ever. " Had I forgotten that ?" said he. " Yes—I took the fifty pieces at the first moment, almost unconscious of what I did ; but that was an absolute trifle compared with the treasures which lay there."—" Where was this money deposited at the time when you were a prisoner in the watch-house ?"—" I had buried it in a

corner of my own garden," was his reply ; though formerly he had denied being at home even for a moment on the night of his escape, nor would his wife admit that she had seen him.

The result of this hearing was directly made known to me, and I had a long consultation with the president. My vexation was extreme, at being reduced to confess that I had been in the wrong, and the clearness with which he had described the adventure of the secretaire—a circumstance which could scarcely have been invented—rendered his prevarication as to the stolen money the more provoking and intolerable. " It is a mere tissue of lies from beginning to end," said the president coldly and decidedly. " Yet I am sorry to say, that, by this deposition, your friend the widow must be directly involved in our proceedings, in order that we may prove the falsehood of this fellow's assertions, because she denies all knowledge of the dagger. However this may be, we must summon her the next court-day, and you had better make her acquainted beforehand that this will be requisite."

Accordingly, I described to the lady all that had occurred, to which she listened with silent

deep attention; only when I mentioned the dagger, she exclaimed in a hurried manner—"How? in my secretaire? Is the man mad?" When my recital ended, she seemed to relapse into her former mood. "Notwithstanding that untruth," said she; "for I deny solemnly ever having had the dagger in my possession, yet I cannot think that Rose is guilty. Nor is it possible that he can have taken the money of which so much is said, because I have never missed it; and, besides, the *louis d'or* which the secretary recognises to be mine, was paid by him to me at a far later date than the period when Herman was employed here to repair the furniture. This can be proved on inquiry."

On repeating this conversation to the president, he observed that, whether the *louis d'or* could or could not be identified, there was no doubt that the money had been obtained by theft; but the prisoner's confession that he knew the dagger, which at first he denied having ever seen, was of far more importance, and seemed nearly to bear out every suspicion that had been raised against him. "Yet, unfortunately," added he; "we have not evidence enough for his

ultimate condemnation." I suggested that Herman's narrative at the last examination, which seemed, by its simplicity, to prove his innocence, and by which the president himself had been deeply moved, surely might warrant, at all events, some alleviation of the severity with which he was treated. "Aye, indeed?" answered the judge; "in order, forsooth, that we might undo the effect of all those advantages which have been gained only by means of this imprisonment? And yet every one speaks of him with great commiseration. I myself am sorry for him. Advise me, then, what ought I to do?"—"Can I give you advice in an affair which is so completely foreign to my peaceable employments and profession? In such a case, it is only your own experience and professional talents that can bring the trial to a satisfactory conclusion."—"So, then," said he; "after abundance of sentiment, you leave me destitute of rational counsel? My good friend, let us be thankful to the wise spirit of policy and law that prevails in our times. Torture, absolutely and properly so called, is exploded; yet the reformers have left us somewhat nearly tantamount to what is taken away, and we are not alto-

gether deprived of means to force the mask from hypocritical villains. What would you bet, that I shall not arrive finally, and, ere long, at the wished-for detection ?"

These words made me tremble, for, in the palpable lie uttered by the accused, I had by degrees brought myself to perceive only a proof of that absolute despair which entertains no fear of death ; and in a state of great agitation, on my return home, I entered the chamber of my hostess. As usual she received me with an air of timid anxiety, and watched every word that fell from my lips. I did not disguise from her my own emotions, and when I spoke of the long imprisonment, perhaps for life, which Herman must encounter, she seemed to undergo a violent inward conflict. At last she took my hand, and said in a low faltering voice, " Dear uncle, is it not so ? May I not rely on you absolutely, and without any reserve ? I implore, then, your assistance—your confidential support and protection for a miserable woman, who, in her despondency, knows not else whither to betake herself for counsel. Rescue, too, an unfortunate man, who doubtless has been falsely accused, and who must, ere

long, be led innocently to the scaffold."—" Pray be more tranquil," said I; " You have declared that the prisoner is falsely accused; but whence can we deduce that conclusion ?"—" Whence, indeed ?" she answered; " Listen only to me,—I know my husband's murderer !"—" How ?" cried I astonished, and involuntarily recoiling; " you know the assassin, and yet have been silent ?" Her last words were pronounced in a calm resolute tone, but my remark seemed to have disconcerted her more than I could have thought possible.—" Durst I speak, then ?" said she; " Well, you must know the murderer was ———." She paused, and looked at me for some moments steadfastly, as if she would see into my very heart,—then added, in a low voice, " Don't you guess it ? the murderer was himself."—" Himself ?" repeated I, disappointed and mournfully. " Oh yes—the wretched prisoner spoke only the truth when he deponed to having seen the fatal dagger in my secretaire. It is true that I denied all knowledge of it; I must do so, for the very sight of that dagger, which he alone could have used, betrayed that he was a suicide. It was my duty to guard the reputation of a dear and excellent husband—

to preserve untarnished the honour of his family and mine,—for I well knew, that to my levity of conduct would be ascribed that gloom and madness which led him to such a deed. I have indeed done more than could have been expected. It was from me that the prisoner received the fifty *louis d'ors*, which I sent to him through his wife, a few days before his flight. His undeserved sufferings were to my feelings agonizing, and I was in hopes that he would have made his escape across the frontier, after which the whole investigation would be forgotten. Now you are in possession of the truth—act, then, as becomes a man—a lover of justice, and Christian pastor. But spare and protect the memory of your friend, and his widow's reputation!"

"I shall go to the president immediately," said I, still quite confused, "and consult with him."—"But take notice," said she anxiously; "beware that you do not say to him one word more than is necessary. Only endeavour to assist the unfortunate man, and, for God's sake, don't mention that I have had any interference with his wife. On her I have enjoined the strictest silence, and even exacted from her a solemn

oath that she would observe it. If Rose could be enabled once more to make his escape, and cross the frontier—for this purpose take half my fortune—take all if it can have any influence, but don't forget that you have now more than my life in your hands."

I said whatever I thought likely to calm her agitation, but resolved, in my own mind, that, as I had perfect confidence in the judge's honour and integrity, I should freely repeat to him the story as it had now been disclosed to me. He shared in my astonishment, "So, then, after all our doubts," said he; "it was even so as we had *at first* suspected?" He spoke in a tone of great vexation, and then fell into a mood of silent reflection. I was obliged to repeat to him several times her identical words, which I did unreservedly, in so far as they related to the trial, but said nothing of her extraordinary emotion, and the anxiety she had evinced for the prisoner, which I thought no one but myself had a right to know. At last he summed up, by requesting that I would call on him again on the day following; and instead of acceding to my request, that the sufferings of the accused might now be

mitigated, he said that he would defer the next examination for some time longer.

Next morning he received me with an unexpected cheerfulness of manner. "Your communications of yesterday," said he; "have caused to me a very unquiet night. But the struggle of conflicting evidence is now past, and I have good reason to think that the lady may have deceived herself; and that, by trusting to her account, we should also be grievously misled. The consciousness of guilt, if that guilt had only been youthful levity of carriage, always excites a generous mind to torment itself. Observe that the secretaire was *broke* open. Now, is it likely that her husband, in order to commit suicide, would have done this,—for the sake of a dagger, too, which was not his own, but belonged to the Prince's museum? Suppose that the *louis d'ors* found on the prisoner were given to him by the lady, yet how could he have obtained, long before this, the means of setting up for himself in the world, when every one knows that he was, in his own circumstances, poor, and unprovided for? It appears to me more than ever probable, that he himself must have taken the dagger, and other

articles of value, which have not yet come to light. Besides, to confess the whole truth, the discoveries that have lately been made had inspired me with a very strong suspicion of an improper understanding betwixt him and the lady. Nay, be not so much alarmed—that suspicion did not last long. I have learned, for the first time in my life, to what extravagant lengths a false and misplaced compassion can mislead the female mind, by which mere conjecture is taken for fixed proof, and I hold her deposition for nothing more nor less than an attempt to save, at all hazards, one whom she believes to be innocent, for *she has never given the prisoner one fraction of the money.* However, I am indebted to this pretext of hers for some new evidence.

"You must excuse me," continued he; "but I could not fulfil my promise to you according to the very letter, though in effect it has not been infringed. My disquietude and suspicions led me early this morning to the wife of the prisoner. After some necessary circumlocution to pave the way before me, I told her that I was already well aware that the fifty *louis d'ors* which had been found on the prisoner came through her

hands, and that she had received them from a lady of rank. She stared at me, without betraying any conscious guilt however, and declared that she knew nothing of all this. Indeed, I was almost convinced that the story of the fifty *louis d'ors* had been a little device of our friend the widow, to whom, in truth, Herman's wife is not known even by sight. The latter, when I began to threaten her, confessed with fear and trembling, that her husband, in the night when he made his escape, had indeed come to the house, where he had hastily put on a great coat, and desired her to light him to an apartment in the ground-floor, where, to her astonishment, he opened a small concealed repository behind the wainscot, whence he took a small rouleau of gold coins, and put it in his pocket. Thereafter, he embraced her fervently and departed. I cannot doubt the truth of this statement, more especially as at my request she led me to see the concealment in the wall, which I found exactly corresponding with her description. Nay, more, I found in it still a single *louis d'or*, which, in his haste, he had of course dropt from the rouleau. Besides, I took notice that the young woman's cheeks burned when I men-

tioned again the lady of rank. I thought of the jealousy by which Herman's domestic comfort was said to have been disturbed, and, by some farther questions, brought her into such confusion, that at last she burst into tears, and confessed that her husband had been in the habit of staying out very late from his own house, and that, even on the fatal night of the murder, he had been absent for several hours, she knew not where. Now, what is your opinion of all this?"

I was forced to admit, that the judge's conclusions with regard to the widow's conduct were probably well-founded,—at least, in regard to the *louis d'ors*, but that she had, out of her own invention, pretended that the dagger was locked up in her secretaire, I could by no means conceive. I joined with him also in believing, that we must be somewhat more guarded in our next communications with her; and he urged that I should bring her as cautiously as possible to the question, how the dagger had come there, which circumstance he always looked on as a mere fabrication. At the same time, from motives of delicacy, he certainly wished that she should not appear in these investigations more than was abso-

lutely requisite. At a short examination the same morning, the prisoner confessed that his wife's deposition regarding the money was altogether correct.

I fulfilled my new commission as carefully as I could, representing to the widow, that, on such occasions, it was the most imperious and indispensable duty to speak the truth; and that even the slightest departure from reality—a mere colouring of facts, in order to benefit the prisoner, might raise suspicions against herself, from which she would not have escaped so long, had we not such perfect knowledge of, and confidence in her character. I told her also, without hesitation, that, unless she could inform us more satisfactorily regarding the dagger, the confession she had already made would do more harm than good to the prisoner. Its identity had been proved with that weapon which had been taken from the Prince's museum; Herman had admitted that it was known to him; and there could be no doubt that the dagger was in one way or another connected with his sudden acquisition of wealth. "I knew very well," said the widow, evidently much vexed, "that the process would take this turn; I

cannot escape my fate. The law is like a magnet, or the enchanted circle of some wicked magician. Speak but a single word relating to a crime, within hearing of a judge, and your life is immediately drawn within his absolute control. Now, all that I can tell you farther is very little. My husband himself showed me this dagger as a curiosity, and left it in my room. I laid it aside, and, when opportunity offered, gave it to him again. This is all that I know of the matter." She was silent and pensive for some time, then suddenly exclaimed in a joyful tone, as if her mind had been wonderfully lightened—"Is it not most likely that the Prince Gustave Benno brought the dagger to this house? Since that unhappy night he has never again crossed our threshold, and it would not become me to appear before him; but you, dear uncle, may go to the palace, and perhaps you will be so good as to deliver a letter from me?" After another pause, she added with an imploring look to Heaven,—"I shall hope and trust, that, in your hands, what I can write may lead to some good result. Add to the contents of my letter a description of what you have heard and seen. Tell him of my tears—my grief

—my distraction. Say, in short, what I know your own kind and sympathizing heart will dictate."

Accordingly, on the following morning, I was provided with a neatly folded and sealed billet, of which the import was to me quite unknown, and with this I made my appearance at the hour of audience in the Prince's palace. He seemed struck and disconcerted when I explained by whom I had been sent thither—broke the seal with agitation, and rapidly changed colour as he read. Then he took several turns to and fro—stood suddenly still, and bowed, as a signal that I should retire, without having allowed me to speak another word, promising, however, that he would, on the same day, consult with the president. I returned directly homeward, and this answer seemed to tranquillize the unhappy lady ; while, on the other hand, the Prince's behaviour gave me but little hope, for I could not discover the slightest trace of kindness or good-will on his features, but rather scorn and malevolence. Altogether, the affair seemed more confused and unpromising than ever, and, with gloomy anticipations, I went in the evening to the judge.

"Have you spoken with the Prince?" was, of course, my first question. "Yes—I had the honour of being summoned to the palace;" said he in a tone by no means satisfactory. "Well, then?"—"Well—he only begged of me to make an end as soon as possible of this trial, which he said had become a scandal and vexation of spirit to the court, and to the whole town."—"And was this all?"—"Then his highness thought proper to give me a rebuke, or rather proposed a question, involving a sharp rebuke, which vexes me the more, as it must be known to you that I have exerted myself to the utmost in this matter. 'As there is so much talk about a robbery,' said he; 'you should not have neglected to inquire whether any keys are in possession of the prisoner, which fit the locks in the counsellor's house.' It certainly did not occur to me that such an investigation could have been of any use whatever, but, by the imputation of neglect, I feel myself deeply injured."—"But the Prince, then, did not speak of the dagger?" said I. "The dagger? Why should he have mentioned it?" exclaimed the judge. I informed him of the widow's suggestions, and the commission she had given me to the Prince.

" I can scarcely bear to hear any farther allusion to the widow," said he; "if the Prince knew of any circumstance that could tend to exculpate the prisoner, we are bound to believe that he would not conceal it, and her insinuation to the contrary might be looked on as a gross insult. His highness did not say one word relating to the dagger."

To the last degree mortified and dispirited, I now went home. It seemed to me as if my incautious good nature, and, perhaps, undeserved sympathy, had involved me in difficulties where I was only groping in the dark, and could not even be sure of the rectitude of my own proceedings. The widow hastened to meet me in the corridor; she read disappointment in my features, and was pale, terrified, and anxious. " For God's sake," said she; " tell me the truth at once. Has the Prince not kept his promise?"—" He has had an interview with the president certainly, but has said nothing that tends to confirm your suggestions. You must indeed beware of speaking too rashly." The widow stared at me. " He said nothing?" exclaimed she. " Oh the reckless unfeeling villain!—Well, may God help the innocent man! —I can attempt no more for him than I have al-

ready done." She covered her face with both hands, and sobbed, so that she could not speak. Her condition once more excited my liveliest compassion. I perceived that she was led astray precisely by the same feelings which had guided my vain and restless endeavours. I could not believe more than she did in Herman's guilt. "But let us beware," said I, "that the light which we desire to throw on the darkness of this mystery is not delusive. We must leave the final result to Providence, with whose decrees no mortal dare interfere. All that our duty enjoined or permitted has been done, and I, for my own part, will not venture a single step further on the occasion."

Besides, it was exceedingly inconvenient for me to remain longer absent from my parochial duties, and the requisite arrangements which I had to make, as executor of my late friend's will, were not yet completed. Next morning I rose early, and, in order to get the better of disagreeable thoughts, laboured so assiduously to finish some letters of business, that my servant had knocked several times at the door before I attended to him. He came to announce that the president had just driven up in his carriage to the door. I dressed my-

self as hurriedly as possible, and went to the apartments of my hostess, but the judge was already gone, and her female servant refused me admittance. "The lady," I was told, "had suddenly become so unwell, that she was unable to see any one."

I had no alternative, therefore, but to betake myself to the president. He was in the court-room, having for this day ordered a new examination. The servants begged that I would wait for him. How long the time appeared to me! Something decisive must have happened, and I had nearly lost all patience, but at last he came in with an air of great triumph and cheerfulness. "Wish me joy," cried he, "for we are now arrived at the goal! The whole evidence is quite clear, and Herman Rose, after all, is the murderer." "Has he confessed, then?"—"In direct terms certainly not," answered the judge; "but he is convicted, however, and more we do not require. How strange!" said he thoughtfully, and with emphasis; "I was indebted to the Prince's question, and to the letter that was written by the lady in order to save the prisoner, for the full discovery that has been made against him. Cer-

tainly I had never expected that any advantage could be gained by searching among his keys, but as I durst not pass over any suggestion of the Prince, I extorted all of them from his wife this morning. One of them, which belongs to the best apartment in their house, attracted my attention, because there is a bit of the iron filed off from one of the wards. His wife owned to me that her husband had done this, on the pretext that the key did not properly fit the lock for which it was intended. Consequently, it had in form become a mere pass-key, and you may readily suppose that I put it into my pocket, and hastened to the widow's house. The key fitted exactly to the lock of the garden-door—I mean the iron-wicket, and also to that of the door leading from the garden into the house. My former suspicions as to Herman's conduct, when he was employed as a workman in the house, all returned with double force. I only staid for a moment to acquaint the lady with the discovery of this new and decisive evidence, then hastened into court, and made the prisoner be brought out. At sight of the key he was evidently much disconcerted; at the same time confessed that he

knew it very well, and that he had filed away some part of the wards. Then, when I asked him in a stern voice, how it came to fit so exactly to the lock of the garden-door at the house of the murdered counsellor, he became pale as a ghost, trembled, and at last fell fainting to the ground. On his recovery, he only said, " I beseech you that I may be again dismissed, and led back to prison; then do with me as you will. I see plainly that my doom is fixed."

" From this moment onwards, he no longer persisted in his denial of the murder as heretofore, and yet never distinctly confessed it. His answer to all interrogatories was, ' Since I well know that you cannot, and will not be convinced of my innocence, therefore I am determined that you shall not hear a word more from me on that subject.' Accordingly, every attempt to gain from him a minute detail of circumstances has been in vain, but the proofs against him are so strong, that no one could now think it necessary to dwell on the trifling insignificant doubts that might yet be started in his favour. It certainly remains inexplicable how the murdered man had got into that chamber, and

also what motive could have led this heretofore good and praiseworthy youth into the crime of murder. What seems most probable is, that after breaking open the secretaire he had been surprised by the sudden entrance of the unfortunate counsellor, and had snatched up the dagger to defend himself, but this remains only a mere conjecture."

The consequence of this last hearing was the condemnation of Herman Rose to death on the wheel. Even the last attempts to bring him to confession, when, for example, his sentence was read before him were in vain. He listened to it in gloomy silence, and not even a new asseveration of his innocence was heard to escape his lips. Meanwhile the lady seemed absolutely distracted; she could no longer insist that he was innocent, and yet considered it very severe and cruel that he should be condemned before all the world had been unanimous in pronouncing him guilty, and while he himself had made no confession. Weak as she now was, she ordered that a carriage should be brought to the door, having resolved to set out and throw herself at the Prince's feet, to beg that he would interpose his power in behalf of the

convict. But all of a sudden she learned that the Prince had taken his departure for the capital! As to the judge's decree being sent to the Prince for his final consideration, this was but a mere form, which could not lead to any good result, as she knew that he had never departed from the strict letter of the law. On this occasion, however, to the astonishment of every one, even of the president, a degree of clemency was shown which had been hitherto quite unexampled. The punishment of the wheel, which, according to law, could only have been mitigated into beheading without torture, was, in the case of Herman Rose, changed into imprisonment for life in the citadel. Thus my worst fears were confirmed, for, according to my judgment, such a fate was even worse than death. I lost no time in taking my departure from a town which could now only afford me the most painful associations; and it was fortunate that, on my return home, I had many duties to fulfil, by strict attention to which I contrived to forget disagreeable recollections.

CHAPTER IV.

FOURTEEN years had past away, when one morning a letter was brought to me along with the newspaper. I was about to open the former, when a column of the paper, with the date D——, Sept. 25, rivetted my attention. It was as follows:—"A dreadful accident has just happened, in consequence of which, the inhabitants of this town are plunged into the deepest melancholy. Yesterday afternoon, about one o'clock, a violent hurricane arose, accompanied with thunder and a fall of large hailstones. Our beloved sovereign the Prince Gustave Benno, who, though advanced in years, continued to enjoy his usual exercise, and who then rode on his way from the summer-palace to town, with a small retinue, was overtaken by this tempest. He spurred his horse in order to reach the place of his destination, but as he was galloping through a narrow street, past

the garden of the late Counsellor von S——, still possessed by his widow, and had come close to her house, one of the window-shutters from the second floor was blown down, and lighted at the horse's feet. The animal was startled—he reared vehemently, and while the Prince, who was a good horseman, tried to force him to obedience, his feet slipped on a smooth flat stone at the threshold of a private gate into the garden. The Prince was thrown over his neck with great violence, fell on the iron bars of the gate, and was so dreadfully injured that he died on the spot."

Having read this, I conjectured rightly, that the letter which had arrived at the same time, would renew all the painful remembrances which I had long banished from my mind. It was from the counsellor's widow, who now, more than ever melancholy and discontented, almost worn out by a slow wasting illness, implored me, by all that I held most dear and sacred, if I had any regard for her soul's rest, that I would come to visit her without delay, for she had communications to make which were of the utmost importance. I thought myself under the necessity of attending to her request; and having obtained leave of ab-

sence from my parishioners, found myself once more under her roof, and seated by her sick-bed, to which she was now always confined.

" My dear uncle," said she in a very languid voice ; " (permit me, unworthy as I am, still to address you as in former years.) You must exert yourself to the utmost, in order to save that unfortunate youth, whose innocence was always known to me, though I durst not speak openly on the subject. Now, however, I feel that the seal of mystery may be broken, and that I have at command proofs the most convincing and indisputable. In the *first* place, Herman Rose did not commit the murder, but I know who was the real assassin, and shall give you his name. I must yet, ere I die, set at liberty that blameless victim, though the town, our sovereign, and all the world should blame my conduct. But with you at least I am safe, and you will not utter a word against me. Know then, that the murderer of my husband was the Prince Gustave Benno !"—" Good Heaven !" cried I quite horror struck ; " and you mention this for the first time *now*,—after an interval of many years, and when the Prince is dead ?"—

" Aye," said she ; " but ere you pass judgment, listen to my wretched story—I have sinned—I have fallen like many others—but my sufferings and punishment were such as have rarely been exampled. The first years of my marriage were indeed not unhappy. I was yet unacquainted with any real or violent passion in others, or in myself, till at length Prince Gustave Benno came to be in the habit of visiting at our house. In a short time, he began to torment me with expressions of his admiration and attachment, to which I could make him no return, and my husband also distressed me by his groundless jealousy.

" The Prince's visits became every day more wearisome, and my husband's suspicions more troublesome and restless. This persecution made me feel a kind of loneliness, a blank to the world, which I had never before experienced, and my discontent was aggravated by numberless petty irritations, so that I could not help entertaining a wish to be revenged on my tormentors. Such was my state of mind, when one day the Prince brought me that crystal dagger, which he had taken from his brother's museum, only to show it to me, because, in a conversation on old

German weapons and armour, which had taken place a short time before, it had been described, and excited my curiosity. This was but one of his usual stratagems to obtain an interview, and the dagger was soon forgotten; but after the Prince had taken leave, I recollected, that, if found in our house, it would afford my husband a new opportunity for his tormenting complaints. I therefore locked it up in my secretaire, where there were also many of the Prince's letters, which he continually forced on me, nor could I refuse to take them without the risk of provoking him beyond measure, having, when his visits commenced, entered into a regular correspondence, wherein I supposed that he was actuated only by a spirit of idle *badinage.*

"The young man Herman Rose had often been employed in our house, and was remarked by almost every one on account of the correctness of his conduct, his graceful person, and his education, which was evidently beyond what could have been expected from one in his humble sphere. I had scarcely noticed him, however, till one afternoon, when I had just escaped from a tiresome interview with the detestable Prince, before which

my husband had betrayed the most violent paroxysm of suspicious rage, I came in great agitation to my own apartment—and on opening the door, saw in a large mirror which hung opposite, the figure of the handsome youth, who was at work polishing the secretaire. I could not at that moment have explained to myself the feelings which this apparition excited. I was conscious of my own innocence—of the gross injustice of the accusations and suspicions that were fostered against me, and felt more than ever disdain and indignation at the conduct of my persecutors. I knew not my own danger, and could not help remaining at the door in silent admiration of the youth's handsome, placid, and yet somewhat mournful features. In the next minute, the lock of the secretaire flew open. Good Heavens! *I* was the witness of whom he spoke, but whom he did not venture to summon. All that he confessed at the last hearing is literally true, only with one exception, I mean the circumstance of his having stolen the *louis d'ors*. He gazed for some moments anxiously at the tempting treasures, clasped his hands, evidently under a severe inward conflict, and closed the secretaire without touching its contents. I

then went up to him, praising his forbearance and self-command, admonishing him, too, that he should beware of such temptations for the future. He was at first quite confounded, but afterwards replied with a degree of feeling and propriety, which might be deemed in one of his rank incredible.—I cannot speak farther on this subject—suffice it to say, that, tormented by my husband's violent temper, and disgusted by the profligate addresses of the Prince, I found in that youth the only being whom I could really love. We met very seldom, however. I gave him money, and it was by this means that he was enabled to provide for his wife, and begin trade on his own account. We had no confidant, and he was therefore under the necessity of altering that fatal key of the garden-door, so that he could enter the house at any time unobserved, for I never ventured to take the right key from its place in the corridor, where my husband, of course, would have missed it, and been in furious wrath if any such evidence had been afforded him.

"All of a sudden, the Prince believed, and certainly not without reason, that his attentions were interfered with by a favoured rival. One evening

he came to me unannounced, when I was sitting in the cabinet adjoining to my bedroom, though hitherto I had received him in the parlour. He reproached me with great bitterness, and seemed, I knew not how, to be too well informed of the real truth. Though he did not mention Herman's name, yet he spoke of nightly assignations, and a too fortunate lover. I took courage, and answered him with scorn and indignation, whereupon he behaved like a madman—was, or pretended to be in despair because I despised his addresses, and at last threw himself at my feet. At that moment, the long-forgotten dagger occurred to my remembrance. I took it out of the secretaire, gave him back his property, and told him, that if he were determined to die because I would not listen to him, then he might avail himself of this instrument as soon as he pleased for that purpose. He started up in a rage, wrested it from my hands, and swore that he would use it in his revenge, if he found that his happiness was sacrificed to that of another. Alas! he fulfilled his promise but too well. One victim has indeed fallen, and the unfortunate Herman Rose still suf-

fers in consequence of the wound inflicted on another by this fatal weapon.

" Suddenly, recovering his self-possession, he declared, with the malicious grin of a demon, that nothing should prevent the fulfilment of his purposes. He concealed the dagger in his bosom, and took the pass-key from the wall, swearing, that if, on this night, the door of my apartment were closed against him, that of my husband should, on the following morning, be open. He left it to myself to brood in solitude over this dark and half-expressed threat. I was in the most frightful state of suspense and agitation, not knowing whether he only wished to inspire me with terror, or had actual proofs in his possession of my acquaintance with Herman Rose.

" While I was deliberating on this uncertainty without being able to form any resolution, my husband, looking pale with rage, burst into the room. To my great satisfaction, however, as if he had been aware of the Prince's designs, he took such measures as must render them nugatory, for he ordered a carriage to be got ready as soon as possible, in which I was to set out for the capital, provided only with such garments as

could be packed instantly, and were requisite for my personal comfort. The rest of my effects, he promised should be sent after me. When I wished to open the secretaire, under pretext that it contained my jewels and money, he would not suffer me to go near it, and in reality what I wished for, was only to secure the Prince's letters. At last, however, he yielded to my request, but although the money was at my command, he would not permit me to touch the smallest scrap of paper. Angrily, and in a tone of defiance as heretofore, I called for wax and a taper, and put my seal on the lock. He laughed scornfully, and asked whether that seal were a talisman, that no human force could burst asunder, then accompanied me himself to the carriage.

"We parted thus for ever. On the evening of the following day, I was called back by intelligence of the murder. Good Heaven! what a return! By what nameless terror was I seized when I thought of the scenes that awaited me!—My husband, the Prince, and Herman Rose, might they not all three have met together? On my entrance into the fatal room, the sight of the dagger restored to me some degree of composure, for I

suspected immediately that the Prince was the real assassin; and this idea turned almost to certainty, when I found that the secretaire had been broke open,—doubtless by my husband, who had left all my property in its usual state, only the Prince's letters were wanting. But though I doubted not by whom the murder had been committed, yet I had no proof, till very lately, of the minute circumstances attending the crime. I know not, even yet, whether the Prince had conceived a great hatred of my husband, and they had fought together, which, considering the violent temper of both, is not improbable; or if the former, in order to get back his letters, and save his own reputation, had no alternative, but must, on this account, become an assassin. The veil of mystery still remains; however, the latter supposition appears the more probable,—and if a doubt could have rested on my mind that the Prince was the criminal, it would have been removed by the consideration that he henceforth absented himself, and never even crossed the threshold of my house.

"Herman, indeed, disappeared also.—Alas! it was not the threatening ghost of a murdered vic-

tim that drove him away, but only his abhorrence of the criminal intercourse into which he had been led, and his resolution to adopt a better life. However, I spoke with him afterwards more than once.

"As to the silver button that was found in the secretaire, I never thought that it could be his, and vainly tried to account for its being there, till the president repeated to me the deposition of the old woman, and mentioned the name of Herman Rose. Then I was dreadfully alarmed.—Alas! had I only allowed destiny to rule, without an attempt to arrest its progress!—My tormenting fears —the devouring remorse for my own guilt—had, as I perceived afterwards, only the effect of drawing the web of his involvements tighter and more indissolubly round the unhappy victim. However, on the same evening after the president's visit, I disguised myself as well as I could, and went out intending to warn him of the necessity for immediate flight, for only by this means could I be protected from disgrace. I met him accidentally at the door of his own house,—on recognising me, he turned pale, and recoiled a few paces. It was evident that he had wished never to

see me again; but after I had led him into conversation, he explained, that, on the night of the murder, he had been at the usual hour in the garden. He knew nothing of my sudden departure, but as he did not see our appointed signal at the window, and there was no light in my chamber, he retreated into a close thicket of underwood. Suddenly the iron wicket was opened, a little man wrapt in a gray mantle hastened past him, unlocked the private door into the house and entered. Almost at the same moment, he had seen a light behind the window-curtains of my apartment, whereupon, concluding that he durst not venture into the house, he quitted his station in the shrubbery and hastened away.

"Thus my suspicions were obviously and indisputably confirmed; but I did not explain this to Herman. I told him only where and how the silver button had been discovered; warned him of the unavoidable consequences, advised him to fly, and conjured him not to expose himself nor me to the danger that threatened us. He thought it was yet too soon to decide on such measures; that nothing was yet to be feared, and I might rely with confidence on his equanimity and courage.

He could not tranquillize me however. I unluckily forced him to take the money, which was afterwards found in his possession, though we disputed long before he would accept of it. Then his wife made her appearance, and I escaped before she perceived me. The rest you are acquainted with; but now, for the first time, you will be able thoroughly to understand my conduct.

"What efforts it has cost both him and me to preserve silence, till, in the conflict, my health and the very springs of life are worn out! That terrible chamber became, in latter years, my cell of repentance and penitence; and I have never neglected, on the anniversary of my husband's death, to spend several hours there. When I entered it on the last of these days, I felt more wretched and desponding than ever. Though it was a cold September morning, the air seemed to me so hot and oppressive, that I could scarcely totter to a window, and draw open the lattice. While I stood there lonely and desolate, gazing on the faded landscape, methought I beheld through the mist-wreaths of the distance, a man approaching on horseback, attired in a grey mantle. Was this, perhaps, an apparition? I believ-

ed that I recognised, in this horseman, the Prince Gustave Benno—started back with horror from the open window, and left the room. Some hours afterwards, the Prince actually came hither on horseback, and you know the catastrophe.

"On the very morning after that event, his old confidential valet brought to me a packet with which his master had entrusted him several years before, with an order, that it should be given me in case that I survived him. I opened it with fear and trembling, and found all the letters that had been taken out of the secretaire. On the inside cover were inscribed, almost illegibly, these words—'Rescued at the price of my own soul.' Among the rest, I found, half-torn, the billet which you once delivered into his hands, and in which I had conjured him, by his own hopes of salvation and mine, that he would save the unfortunate man who was now under trial, by informing the president that my husband had received the dagger from him. He had written on a blank leaf of my letter,—'I had sworn a solemn oath, that, with the dagger here mentioned, I should put to death that worthless profligate. My silence at this time redeems my vow.' Can

there be a shadow of doubt after what I have thus detailed to you? Now, leave me with my grief, which never can have an end in this world; hasten from hence to the capital, and endeavour to set at liberty the miserable and guiltless victim of oppression and deceit."

For my own part, I was perfectly convinced that she had now spoken the truth, but by what means was it possible for me to effect Herman's liberation? Open undisguised proceedings would have ruined all; the memory of the Crown Prince must of course be duly honoured, and my hopes rested solely on the benevolence of the Governor at the fortress. I left the penitent widow, quite assured that death would soon afford the only balm that could now be expected for her wounds, and the physician was of opinion, that without some extraordinary change, she must, in a few weeks, sink under that resistless disease, a broken heart. Conscious that we should not meet again, I had given her my last benediction, and departed with anxiety to fulfil that wish, which, if gratified, was of all the most likely to afford her consolation.

The character which had been drawn of the

commander of the fortress, in which the unfortunate man was now confined, sanctioned my hopes, —yet the longer I reflected on former circumstances, the more did the prospect seem to darken before me. The prerogatives of high rank, the relationship of the different classes in society, and abuses of the law filled my mind with disgust and indignation. At length I drew near the wished-for ramparts;—in a mood of deep melancholy I crossed the rattling draw-bridge, and proceeded through the long archway into the town, which appeared to me like one vast prison. The commandant received me very kindly, but it was not without faltering, and an inexplicable presentiment of evil, that I told him my business related to Herman Rose, a young man who had been convicted of robbery and murder. "Herman Rose!" he repeated, and seemed to recollect himself slowly. "Alas! it is needless to inquire for him—he has been dead and buried these three years."

THE WARNING.

THE WARNING,

AN ADVENTURE, AS RELATED BY THE LATE HOFRATH E****, MERCHANT IN B*****.

It happened in the autumn of the year 1799, that I found myself obliged to make a journey of considerable length, for which I had completed the necessary arrangements, and packed my *sac de nuit*, when my wife, on account of an extraordinary dream, begged most earnestly that I would give up my intention and stay at home. Having important business on hand, and being now in great haste, I could not patiently bear with her obstinate resistance, but answered at last so harshly, that she burst into tears. At this, I was much distressed. I durst not leave her in that unhappy mood, but began to expostulate, and to explain the absolute necessity for my journey. We tried

to compromise the matter, and, instead of setting out early in the morning, I agreed to stay till after dinner, though even that change in my plan was exceedingly awkward and inconvenient.

By this means, however, my wife gained time to narrate her dream at full length, and it was no doubt sufficiently alarming. She had imagined that I was attacked in a gloomy forest by robbers, who had dragged me from my horse, and brought me into a cave, there to be instantly murdered. The ground was covered with horribly mangled carcasses, that seemed to stretch out their skeleton arms to grasp at the new comer, and yet there was one hideous white figure in a shroud, that rather strove to protect me from the assassins. Whether or not he succeeded in these attempts she could not tell, for "a change came o'er the spirit of her dream;" and these phantoms made way for others which were less vivid and significant, but no less terrible.

As no one in the world despised dreams more than I did, I took this opportunity of telling my Sophia how truly absurd and ridiculous it was to dwell seriously on such fancies; adding, however, that, if superstitious fears were entertained and

persevered in, this conduct might actually bring on those evil consequences which we sought to avert. For if she had not vexed me so much by her inopportune anxiety, I might have that day, according to my intentions, have reached the country residence of an old friend, where I should have been comfortably quartered for the night, instead of which I must now either ride in the dark, or be forced to lodge in a wretched village alehouse.

Notwithstanding my arguments, Sophia's disquietude continued unabated; but this did not hinder me from setting out after dinner, for my business could not be delayed. Want of ready money obliged me, at that time, to visit several small towns, where I had accounts unpaid, and expected to obtain farther orders. I might certainly have availed myself of my wife's carriage for the journey, but my physician had of late enjoined me to ride as much as possible on horseback, and I took the opportunity to put his advice into practice, for which I could otherwise spare little or no time from my engagements in the counting-house.

On my route, I could not deny myself the pleasure of visiting my old friend Nicholas Waldheim, (knowing that I must, at all events, pass near his

house,) for we had been schoolfellows and playmates; we had been brought up as merchants in the same town, and commenced business at the same time. His affairs, however, did not seem to prosper like mine; he retired early, and now lived on a small estate, which he had saved enough to purchase.—As he never came to town we had not met for many years, and although I had often proposed to visit him, one melancholy occurrence after another had always come in the way, (for example, the death of my former wife, and of several beloved children,) so that I could never fulfil my intentions. By dint of time I had almost ceased to think of him; but now the impressions of old friendship were forcibly renewed, and I was resolved that I would, at all risks, find out his residence. This happened accordingly. Waldheim received me with great kindness. I was entertained with the best fare which his house afforded, and he insisted that I should by no means think of travelling farther that day. However, I could not decide on remaining with him through the night, this being the second day of my journey, but, at his earnest entreaty, promised that I

would certainly make a longer stay on my return homewards.

To say the truth, I had been much disappointed in this visit.—I had delighted myself with the thoughts of our meeting, had dreamed of old times, when, with glad hearts, in all the vivacity of youth, we had formed gigantic plans, and our future prospects appeared in the brightest, most dazzling colours. I wished to excite in my friend's mind the same visionary recollections which had taken possession of my own; but I soon found that this was with him quite out of the question. Whenever I touched on those subjects, Waldheim instantly broke off the conversation,—inquired particularly, however, as to my present employments and purposes, affecting the most cordial interest in my welfare, though it was but too easy to perceive that all the while his manners were constrained, and his kindness pretended. This could not arise from any special dislike to me; I gave him no farther trouble than that of a short visit; it only proved that he must have encountered misfortunes of which I was not aware, and that sorrow had brought on him this coldness of heart, which it was not possible for the presence, even of a very old and

intimate friend to subdue. His brow was indeed furrowed by so many wrinkles; his eyes shone with such a dark mysterious fire, and their movements were so wayward and suspicious, that I could scarce bear to look at him. His wife, who might now be about fifty years of age, kept up a constant grin on her visage, which was intended for an expression of good humour, and yet, being evidently forced, gave her more the appearance of a malevolent sorceress than a kind hostess. She had two sons,—to the younger of whom I had stood godfather. One was now twenty-three, the other twenty-two years of age; but, notwithstanding their youth, and features decidedly handsome, both wanted altogether that cheerfulness—that expression of candour and confidence which should have belonged to their time of life.

On inquiring what was to be their future destination in the world, I was informed that they preferred agriculture to every other employment. I could not approve of this, as I saw plainly that retirement in the country had by no means contributed to Waldheim's welfare; his house was indeed tolerably well-furnished and supplied; but his own gloomy looks betrayed the toil and care which

this had cost him. I gave it as my opinion, therefore, that they would succeed better as merchants, and made a proposal to take the younger brother as a clerk into my own house. The young man appeared well pleased with my offer; but his father's vexation was so evident, that he could scarcely answer in his usual tone of voice,—"he had been himself sufficiently unfortunate in trade, and would never consent to his son's engaging in any such speculations." As the conversation now seemed painful to him, I broke it off abruptly, and, recollecting my own urgent avocations, took my departure, having renewed my promise, that I would, on no account, forget to visit them on my return, and remain for at least one night.

During this brief interview, I had collected materials enough for after-reflection, and continued to perplex myself on the subject all the way to my next halting-place. Our moralists and poets describe the pleasures of a country life, and the contentment of the husbandman, in such brilliant colours, that, according to them, it is to be wondered at if any mortal who can leave town should confine himself within its gloomy prison-walls. On the other hand, they

assure us, that cheerfulness, tranquillity, and health, are to be found with never-failing certainty among the fields and woods, while the townsman must always be a miserable and care-worn animal. How different, on the other hand, is reality,—of which my friend's fate was a notable example! In town he had uniformly been active and cheerful—seemed to be quite contented in his domestic circumstances; in short, was in all respects prosperous and happy. One glance, however, was now sufficient to ascertain that he was in the last degree dissatisfied with his lot, —his former merriment had completely declined; nor between him and his wife did there appear to exist any cordial union of spirit. His sons, young as they were, had acquired already their father's gloom and perplexity of aspect; and if on their parts this could not be the result of worldly cares, it might have other causes, —perhaps low libertinism and sensual indulgence. As to the sloth and inactivity of all the family, this was, alas! proved beyond a doubt by the state of the garden, which was an absolute wilderness, and by the miserable corn-fields, where the scanty straggling crop showed an utter want

of management and attention.—The house and farm-offices were half ruinous; the roads almost impassable; besides, the district in which Waldheim's farm lay was gloomy and repulsive. The lands were flat and sandy, surrounded on every side by dark fir-woods, that shut out every pleasant prospect. No verdant meadows refreshed the wearied eyes—no clear lively streams varied the landscape; only, not far from the dwelling-house, there was a desolate stagnant lake, which any good husbandman would have drained and got rid of. "Thither," said I to myself, "one should send the romantic panegyrists of a country life,—there they would find the most complète and incontrovertible refutation of their pastoral and Arcadian theories!"

I was glad when I came into the woods, which at least afforded me protection from the sun's heat; but the road, with its everlasting sameness of scenery and lonely silence, broken only by the screams of rooks and ravens, became insupportably tiresome, so that I felt again rejoiced on emerging into the open country. The district in which I now found myself seemed at first by no means attractive;—however, when I had as-

cended a steep eminence, a landscape truly beautiful was once more spread before me. The rich corn-fields gleamed in the golden light of the now setting sun. I saw the husbandmen returning from their labours; the herds and flocks; the white sails of the merchant-vessels on the noble winding river; while in the back ground rose the church-towers of a pleasant town, where I intended to pass the night.—I could now have retracted all that I had said against rural life, and even become its panegyrist in my turn.

In this town, however, my commercial transactions first began; and in consequence the good spirits with which I had entered its gates were soon put to flight. The accounts of a wholesale merchant in a large city, with petty retailers in the country, are generally rather confused; and, as I now proved by experience, their adjustment is attended with no little trouble. These people have, in their confined circle, so many trifling stratagems, and their intellects are so narrow, that one must absolutely have new weights and scales, and a new measuring-rod, in order to deal with them! Their sphere is so limited, that, in comparing accounts, they set to work with a tedi-

ousness and circumstantiality that drive any opulent merchant beyond all bounds of patience; and, notwithstanding this, they have no pretensions to punctuality or good order; for the domestic arrangements of every family, which, in a small town, are talked of by the whole inhabitants, give each householder more than enough to do. Besides, on account of their narrow range of business, every merchant must enter into different and unaccording branches of trade. Their activity wants the principle of unity and concentration; therefore order is also completely deficient.

Consequently I had the more reason to be satisfied that I had undertaken the journey, for I was convinced that my presence only could be a check on their impertinent delays, or prevent serious losses which I might have otherwise incurred. With a good deal of trouble, I was fortunate enough to obtain payment of several heavy accounts, which I insisted on receiving in ducats or Friedrich's d'or, silver being inconvenient for a traveller; after which I pursued my journey. The same troubles awaited me in other small towns; yet in all I was successful in combating such obstacles, and winding up my affairs with-

in the space of time that I had prescribed to myself at setting out.

At one of the places which I was obliged to visit, it was not without great alarm that I found one of my household servants waiting for me with a letter. I opened it in trepidation, expecting some disastrous news from home; but in this I was mistaken.—My wife wrote to me, that, since my departure, she had been tormented by the most frightful apprehensions, which she had been enabled to quiet only by determining to send out a confidential servant, entreating that he might be allowed to continue his attendance for the rest of my journey. She had been again terrified by a spectral dream, which afforded her the most certain tokens that misfortune now hung over me. Vexed as I happened to be at the moment by a dispute that I had encountered with one of my troublesome debtors—startled too by the man's unexpected appearance—and provoked at my wife's childish superstition—I was in no humour to comply with her request.—On the contrary, I expressed great displeasure that she should have sent the servant from home, where his assistance was always required in the ware-

house; and turned him back with a letter, in which I begged that she would not trouble me any more with such unpardonable folly—reminding her at the same time, that the personal safety of every traveller in that country was guarded by a most active and watchful police. On that day and the two following, my journey indeed led through a populous and flourishing district,—one small town or another was always in view; the weather, too, was cheering and delightful; so that I felt no regret whatever at having sent away the servant.

My transactions being at last wound up, I thought of returning homewards by a new route, which was equally convenient with the former for a traveller on horseback, and was considerably shorter than the high road. But now, in truth, I had reason to think that it would have been better to retain my wife's courier, for I had with me a large sum of money, and its weight was too obvious to escape notice when the portmanteau was taken from my horse at an inn, and left oftentimes in the care of my host. It was hardly to be expected that the thoughts of robbery would not enter into the mind of some one or another,

and, more than probable, that attempts would be made to put such plans into execution. I had, besides, to cross long tracts of forest scenery; and the autumnal weather began to break, so that, for the sake of expedition, I was obliged to travel a good way in the dark. I consoled myself with the thoughts that my horse was excellent, and that I was provided with a pair of doubly-loaded pistols, by which I trusted, that, in the hour of need, I should be able to defend my life and property.

The first day of my homeward journey I still kept on the high-road, but I had many a long mile betwixt me and the place where I intended to pass the night; so that I stopped for refreshment seldom, and as short a time as possible. My horse, therefore, shared in my sufferings from hunger and fatigue, when at last about nightfall I reached the appointed station. But here, what a strange reception awaited me! The host and hostess exhibited visages that were, without exception, the most repulsive I had ever beheld in my life. It is impossible to conceive a more determined concentration of savage wildness, gloom, and malicious discontent, than was betrayed by

these people. At the same time, they tried as usual to appear courteous and friendly, but the effort that this obviously cost them rendered their aspect only more detestable. I would willingly have retired to rest, if hunger had not forced me to wait for supper, of which the preparations required unusual delay. Meanwhile they had shown me into a room, but, growing tired of its solitude, I only staid to examine whether there were any concealed trap-stairs or tapestry-doors, and, being satisfied on this point, betook myself to the landlord's apartment, where I entered into conversation with his daughter, a girl of remarkable beauty. I was surprised at the proofs of good education which she displayed in this dialogue, and felt the more interested by an appearance of reserve and melancholy which seemed to have taken deep root in her young and innocent heart. I was afraid to give her pain by rash questions, but prolonged the discourse in hopes of learning the cause of this grief, or being able to guess at her misfortunes, till her mother came and called me to supper. Then, too, as in the preceding dialogue, my desires were left ungratified, for the dishes, produced at last, were so

abominably bad, that I was unable to eat a single morsel. Want of sleep soon drove me to my bedroom, which was on the second floor. The frightful rushing of the wind through the neighbouring fir-trees—the beating of the rain on the casements, and gloomy *tout ensemble* of this vile habitation, —brought my mind into a strange mood, which, though I am no coward, was nearly allied to terror. That my host and hostess were not to be numbered among good people I was thoroughly persuaded, but if they were so very wicked as to rob and murder their guest, was a question which I could not determine. The longer I thought on this subject, the more I was inclined to believe that my life was by no means safe under their care, and many stories crowded on my remembrance of secret murders, from which the best organized police in the world cannot afford protection.

At length I heard the outward doors of the house groaning on their hinges, and violently closed for the night. It seemed to me, thereupon, as if I were quite shut out from all the world, and thrown into a den of murderers. I even went to the window to examine whether, in case of need,

I might not venture to leap from it, which expedient, on account of the height, I found quite out of the question. Now I remembered the dreams and forebodings of my wife, which increased my agitation. I carefully shut the door, piled up some chairs against it, that in the event of any one entering, I might be awakened by their fall; laid my pistols within reach, and betook myself to rest.

Weariness soon overpowered all other sensations, and I fell fast asleep. I might have slumbered about an hour, when a noise awoke me, that seemed to be in my chamber. I raised myself from the pillow;—but what language can describe my horror, when, by the glimmering starlight, I actually beheld a figure robed in white, a phantom as it seemed,—wrapt in a shroud,—that stationed itself opposite my bed! My hair now stood on end, my teeth chattered, and for a while I lost all self-possession. At length I summoned up resolution and grasped one of my pistols, by which the figure did not seem in the slightest degree discomposed or intimidated; but, raising one arm in a threatening attitude, exclaimed in a hollow tone, "Be not afraid, for I come only to warn

you. Go not again to the house of Waldheim, if you value your existence, for you will never come alive from under his roof." For a few moments the spectre stood motionless—then added, " Hast thou understood me ?" and when, in a trembling voice, I answered " yes," he instantly disappeared.

I remained for a long while as if petrified, and stared at the place where the apparition had been, without being able to alter my position ;—at last, I rubbed the cold sweat from my forehead, and, by a vehement effort, roused myself from this trance, but I was perfectly convinced that what I had witnessed had been *no dream !* I had never believed in ghosts, nor indeed troubled myself much with speculations as to their existence or non-existence ; now, however, I had ocular and auricular demonstration of their reality ; for, as to the possibility of deception, that idea was removed not only by the inexplicable mode of appearing and vanishing, but by all other circumstances. The innkeeper could never have caused this scene by stratagem, nor would have thought of doing so, for he himself had advised me earnestly to take the road that led through Waldheim's farm, and

to pass the night there. And who but the innkeeper could know anything of my plans, or wish to interfere with them?

What danger I could possibly incur at my friend's house, was to me a new riddle; and I kept awake debating this point long after my terror of the apparition had subsided. I firmly resolved, however, to follow its admonitions, which were evidently connected with, and in harmony with my wife's dreams and anticipations. Not till towards morning did I fall asleep, and never awoke till a loud knocking at my door disturbed me. This noise was made by the innkeeper, who had been alarmed at my non-appearance, and inquired whether I were unwell? I started up, dressed myself in great haste, paid my chalked bill for refreshments, which I was unable to taste, for I found the breakfast as abominable as the supper had been, then rode away as fast as I could, to make up for the time that had been lost in sleep.

About mid-day I began of course to feel unusually hungry, and was fortunate enough to find a pleasant inn on the road-side, where I was supplied with an excellent dinner. As I must, ac-

cording to the ghost's injunctions, choose a different route from that with which I was acquainted, I made inquiries of my host, and obtained from him the necessary directions. He was a good-humoured loquacious man, and seemed very willing to enter into conversation on whatever subject I started. I inquired, therefore, whether he was acquainted with my friend Nicholas Waldheim, who lived in that neighbourhood? At this question the man's cheerful countenance became immediately clouded—he looked at me suspiciously—was silent a few moments—and then answered drily, that he certainly did know the man of whom I spoke. I wished to hear more, and begged him to say what was his opinion of Waldheim; what character he bore in the country, and whether he had been successful in his farming occupations? My host shook his head; assured me that he was quite unprepared to enter into those particulars; and, for a long while, I could not obtain from him any satisfactory reply. At last he said, that, from his own knowledge, he could not vouch for any action good nor bad of my friend Waldheim; however, that his mode of life was considered by almost

every one quite inexplicable; for the produce of the fields there always turned out so miserable a crop, that it could not pay the farm-servants' labour, yet, notwithstanding this, the man continued to maintain a numerous household, and it was said that they all lived well. For the rest, he did not associate with any person of his own rank, never appeared with his family at church, and the members of his establishment were so reserved and shy, even of the daylight, that scarcely any neighbour could boast of having spoken with one among them. This intelligence was to me very perplexing, it seemed so inconsistent with the former disposition of my friend, who could scarce ever have enough of society! At all events, the change proved nothing in his favour, and I was by this means the more confirmed in my determination of not going to his house. The innkeeper, to whom I mentioned what had been my intentions, approved highly of this caution, and begged urgently that I would adhere to my present resolution, adding, "There are many strange stories of the forests in these parts;" but as to the ground of these allusions, I could not obtain from him any adequate explanation.

I was obliged to hasten onwards, that the night might not overtake me; for on that day I had still a long way to travel. Besides, there were dark clouds on the horizon, and it was easy to foretell that ere long a formidable tempest must ensue. I rode, therefore, as hard as it was possible to do, without absolutely foundering my horse. The recollection of the nocturnal apparition,—my wife's forebodings,—the doubtful expressions of my landlord as to the character of Waldheim, by turns occupied my attention, and beguiled the way, though certainly not in a manner the most agreeable. Meanwhile, the night drew on apace, and it was evident that the darkness, aided by the gathering clouds, would be quite impenetrable. There was a distant rolling of thunder, which reverberated hollowly through the forest; pale lightning quivered at intervals through the clouds, and the gloom always increased. It seemed as if the woods never would have an end. I made my horse exert himself to the very utmost, in order to reach some place of shelter; but at length I was obliged to pull him up, for the road became gradually more narrow, and the branches of the trees gave me such strik-

ing illustrations of the propriety of riding cautiously, that I was obliged to yield to them. My situation was certainly in the utmost degree vexatious,—more especially as I knew not even whether or not I was on the right road. *Now* I sincerely lamented my rash conduct in dismissing the servant that my wife, in her loving kindness, had sent after me, and was obliged to acknowledge, that my present difficulties were only a well-deserved punishment. The darkness, which had by this time grown quite opaque, obliged me to dismount, and lead my horse by the bridle, otherwise I had no chance of avoiding the branches, from which I had already received many severe blows. In such manner, my progress was of course very slow, and my hopes of reaching any habitation become always fainter. At last, however, I found myself once more on the clear level ground; I felt as if I had just then escaped from a prison; I could again mount my horse, and ride along without dreading every moment to have my head knocked off my shoulders by a tree.

The thunder clouds, however, had always come nearer and nearer; the lightning dazzled me

with its quivering flashes; the wind rose through the neighbouring wood in strange fitful blasts, which were regularly followed by a mysterious stillness, augmenting the terrors of the hour. Yet now my hopes were revived by a light gleaming in the distance, although, in order to approach it, I durst not spur my horse, for the thunder startled him, and I was obliged to use every precaution to avoid being unseated by a sudden plunge.

I had by degrees come so near the light, that I could discern, by its aid, the building from which it emanated, but, to my great consternation, I perceived that I had gone quite astray, and was now on the property—close to the very threshold of Nicholas Waldheim. Good counsel rose above par with a vengeance! Should I enter his house, or leave it? My horse was tired,—the storm raged unrelentingly,—and I felt myself so much in want of that repose to which the hospitable mansion of an old friend invited me; while, on the other hand, the most alarming, even supernatural warnings had announced that *here*, of all places in the world, I must not risk my personal safety. Perhaps, however, my extreme want of

food and rest would have made me decide on braving all dangers, if my horse had not shown a violent disinclination to proceed any farther, and turned sharp round. This trifling circumstance put an end to my debate, and I resolved that I would rather pass the night in the forest than trust myself with a man whose character and mode of life were so very questionable.

Accordingly, I took my way back towards the woods, leaving it to chance to bring me on the high-road; or, if that might not be, I hoped to find some cottage, or other place, where I could at least obtain shelter from the rain, which now began to fall in large drops. I was glad when I reached the trees, which would afford me some protection; but new difficulties awaited me, for, on the outskirts of the forest, I did not think myself sufficiently secure against Waldheim's people, and the thickets were so dense and entangled, that my horse could not be led through them. I forced a passage through the branches, however, but at every step these became more closely interwoven, and the ground was more uneven. Several times I had fallen over the roots of trees, my face and hands bled from the scratches

I had received, and my strength was nearly exhausted. At last, I heard a rushing noise of water as from a mill race, whence I concluded that I was near to some habitation, and redoubled my exertions to reach it if possible; but as it was in vain to think of bringing my horse any farther, I tied him by the bridle to a tree, took off the portmanteau, which I threw across my shoulders, and fastened by the straps round my neck. My route was now very hazardous. I had to clamber over great trunks of trees and fragments of rock—had to struggle through deep places, where I was often so hemmed in by thickets of brushwood that I could neither get backwards nor forwards,—till I nearly lost all courage. Add to these hindrances the frightful thunder storm, and the terror that I might be struck down by lightning, attracted by the steel clasps of my portmanteau. My condition was indeed most grievous, but after long persevering labour, I came to the edge of a declivity under which the rivulet rushed.—I followed its course, not without imminent danger of tumbling in headlong, and found my conjectures confirmed that there was a mill there. A gleam of lightning showed me a large building of that

description, but the ruinous sluice, over which the water now played idly, proved that it was in disuse; therefore, probably, there were no inhabitants. On farther search, I discovered an old tottering bridge, leading across the mill-race; which I passed, and ran towards the building for shelter, while the rain fell in torrents. Suddenly it occurred to me that this place might be the resort of robbers, in which case I should absolutely throw myself into their hands; but my fatigue was so great that it overbalanced my apprehension. I found the door open—(a sign that no one lived there)—I groped about with great caution in the darkness, and advanced till I touched the platform of the inner mill-wheel. Quite worn out, yet terrified by the thoughts of falling perhaps through a hole in the floor, or stumbling over some murdered victim, I seated myself at last in a corner, and resolved to wait there for daylight.—Scarcely had I composed myself for rest, when a most overpowering sense of horror came over me. What could be the real history of this building, which stood so desolate and forsaken?—If robbers, as it seemed probable, haunted the place, would I not certainly

be found out and murdered?—What if the midnight spectre should again appear to me?—These, and other harassing thoughts, forced themselves on my mind; and I was the less able to combat them, when, reclining on the floor, I became aware of a most detestable atmosphere, as if from a charnel-house, which became so insupportable, that I would have left my hiding-place, if my fears had not rendered me powerless. After I had remained for about an hour in this torment, voices were audible at the door; and as I had no doubt that the new comers were banditti, my death seemed now irrevocably decreed. I could hear that there was some wrangling among them as to the cause of the door being found open, after which four men came in with a lantern, and bearing a sack that was filled evidently with some cumbrous and heavy load.—They drew near without observing me, lifted up some boards in the flooring, and opened the sack. It contained the bloody corpse of a man, which they threw down under the floor, then closed up the aperture as before.

My hair now stood on end. I shook as in an ague fit, and nearly fainted; for, in addition to

the other terrors of this scene, I recognised Waldheim's eldest son among the murderers. "So much for that fellow!" said he, when they had thrown down the body; "if we had met with E*****," (here he mentioned my name,) "and disposed of him in like manner, it would have been better worth our trouble."—"I am afraid," said another, "we have no chance of seeing him to-night."—"Well," answered a third, "if he comes not to-night, he will to-morrow;—at all events, he shall not escape us."—Perhaps I had unconsciously made some noise; for the ruffian Waldheim remarked—"The door was left open; let us search the house, that we may be sure no one is watching us." The rest, however, were afraid; they alleged that it was no place to remain in longer than necessity required; and it was impossible that any one would venture to watch there, unless it were some revengeful ghost. This cowardice saved my life; for if, in reality, they had searched the building, I must have been discovered, and my death was certain.—At last they quitted this den of murder, and carefully locked the door.

My feelings at that moment baffle every at-

tempt to describe them. How near I had been to destruction!—I had just seen one murdered victim secreted, and heard that a like fate was destined for me. Even now I was by no means safe, for if by chance they discovered my horse, this would doubtless excite their suspicions—they would then come back and make a resolute search. If I could escape on the return of daylight was also uncertain; but these miserable apprehensions were increased to a nameless horror, when I heard the murdered man beneath me groaning hideously, and rattling in his throat. I am certain that I heard him—he was murdered, indeed, for his wounds must have been mortal, but life was not yet extinct. The cold sweat stood on my forehead—my heart beat audibly—I had almost died; indeed, it seemed as if the night would never have an end. My senses were confused in delirium, and I almost doubted if I yet lived.

At last the gray light of morning began to gleam through the broken roof, and hopes revived that I might make my escape. As soon as I could clearly distinguish objects, I went to the door, but it was so thoroughly secured that all

my efforts to force it open were in vain. In searching through the building for some other outlet, I stumbled on the entrance to the pit-fall, into which the last victim had been thrown; I lifted up the boards, and, with indescribable abhorrence, beheld eleven dead bodies, many of them already in the most frightful stages of corruption—among these I was to have been deposited, and might be so still, if I did not succeed in gaining my liberty. After much trouble I found another door, which yielded to a vehement effort; it led into a room in which there were many bloody dresses hung up against the wall. This apartment was lighted by a small window, of which I instantly broke the casement, and, though at the risk of my neck, leapt out.

Now then I was at liberty; but still I had not my horse, nor, if he were found, did I know in what direction I should ride in order to escape from those assassins. I retraced, as nearly as I could guess at it, my course of the preceding night, and having now the advantage of daylight to guide me through the thickets, discovered my faithful steed sooner than I could have expected.

A beaten cart-road also presented itself; I mounted and trotted away with the utmost expedition.

Though the scenes were quite new to me, and I could not tell whither I went, yet chance, for this time, favoured my purpose; for, after riding about two miles, I reached a post-station. Here, as soon as I had obtained some refreshment, I took a carriage with extra horses, and drove as rapidly as possible towards B*****. I reached home the same day, and, on my arrival, had recourse to the director of police, before whom I made a circumstantial declaration of my adventures, whereupon he ordered a proper legal inquiry to be commenced, and the same evening dispatched one of his officers with a band of soldiers to Waldheim's residence.

My wife was overjoyed at my safe return, having felt the most unconquerable anxiety during the whole time of my absence; but my sufferings from that terrible night were not yet complete. I was attacked by a fever, which ended in very serious illness. My strength had been so severely tried by the excitement I had undergone, that extreme weakness and relaxation followed, and I must have

perished, but for the constant attention of a skilful physician, under whose management, after being six weeks confined, I felt myself once more in a condition to leave my room.

As soon as my health allowed of any exertion, I made a visit to the prison in which Waldheim was now secured. Notwithstanding his crimes, and the attack which he would doubtless have made on my life, I could not help looking on him with some degree of compassion, and wished to alleviate his sufferings as far as the law would permit. However, no sooner had I made my appearance, than he began to rave like a madman, and broke out into the most horrible imprecations, as if he were determined to prove how undeserving he was of that interest which I took in his fate. In a few minutes I was obliged to leave him with aversion and disgust, but I begged the gaoler to obtain for me an interview with Waldheim's younger son, from whom I hoped to extract some information as to his father's crimes. The young man, when he saw me, was moved even to tears, and answered my inquiries with such candour, that, on my return home, I was able to set on paper what here follows, and which

corresponds exactly with the records of the criminal court.

Nicholas Waldheim, at his commencement in trade, was exceedingly active and prosperous. His income was competent; he lived within it, so that his fortune augmented slowly indeed, but securely, and his credit rose every year. By some unexpected windfalls, however, my capital increased so much that I was able to extend my business to an extraordinary degree, and this excited his envy. Till then, we had always advanced on an equal footing, both as to our gains and our expenditure; our credit and influence on Change were the same, and there was, in truth, no difference between our respective fortunes; but now these circumstances were completely changed. Never having been inclined to avarice, I did not deny myself any elegance or luxury which my resources now warranted; at length, I considered a handsome carriage and horses allowable, therefore indulged in the purchase of both. My first wife was perhaps more partial to fine dresses than was altogether commendable, but as we lived very happily together, I did not choose to run the risk of involving myself in domestic quarrels,

by crossing her harshly in this humour. Meanwhile, the wife of Waldheim wished to be attired exactly like mine; and as he could not afford such expence, she overwhelmed him with reproaches for his bad management. He would indeed willingly have competed with me in all respects, but feeling this to be out of his power, he tried passionately every method, however hazardous, to become quickly opulent. He strained his credit to the utmost, and entered into speculations, which brought with them a tumult and whirl of business, quite beyond his strength to support. In the confusion thus induced, he overlooked the necessary precautions; his reputation for punctuality was impaired, and the fall of his house seemed inevitable.

The thoughts of being reduced to poverty through those very exertions which were intended to make him rich, were to Waldheim so insupportable, that he took the resolution of ending his sufferings by suicide. With this weight on his mind, he wandered about restlessly for sometime, till the very day had arrived which he had fixed on for the execution of his purpose; and he was traversing the fields near a country house

which he then rented in the environs of B****. Quite absorbed in his own gloom and despondency, he was insensible to all that passed around him, till he felt himself pulled by the sleeve, and saw a fine artless boy about sixteen years of age, who inquired of him the way to the house of a merchant, who was said to live in that neighbourhood, and for whom he had a packet of letters. This merchant was no other than Waldheim himself; and on inquiry, he found that the boy was a son of one of his own country correspondents, who sent not letters only, but a considerable sum of ready money, which was to be appropriated to certain specified purposes. The boy had come with the diligence, but had left it at the last station, in order to enjoy a walk in fine weather through the pleasant gardens that surround the city. Waldheim, as if the devil had been there present in *propria persona*, was seized with a horrid and overpowering impulse, which he was the less disposed to combat, as his whole soul had just before been possessed by the idea of self-murder. He led the boy by circuitous paths, where he would escape observation; and said that he was going himself to town, where the merchant

then was, with whom he was well acquainted, but must first call at his own country house. He brought his unsuspecting victim into a retired apartment, without being seen by any mortal;—there put him to death, and thus became possessed of a large sum, partly in paper, but mostly in ducats, which the unfortunate lad had carried in a huntsman's leather bag.

He had just completed this atrocious deed, when the door unexpectedly opened, and his wife with her two sons entered the room. At first their astonishment and abhorrence were unbounded; however, when he had explained his desperate circumstances, from which only this crime could have relieved him, their detestation of his guilt was gradually lost in terror of the consequences which might else have awaited him and the whole family. Thus he threw the disastrous load of his own wickedness on the conscience of his wife and of his children; after which disclosure they became gradually more and more accustomed to a life of suspense, misery, and deception. They were obliged to assist him in that first adventure, to conceal the body of his murdered victim, and, in order more effectually to

avoid all suspicion, he appeared with his wife and sons at a large party, to which they had been invited for that day. Aided by the money thus obtained, he upheld his sinking credit, but the conscious guilt which weighed on his heart left him not a moment's peace of mind. He could not endure the ordinary restraints of society; therefore by degrees withdrew himself from trade, and purchased that landed property on which I found him.

Being quite ignorant of husbandry, he soon discovered that it would be impossible for him to live by this farm, which, even under the best management, would have yielded but a very narrow income, and was on the point of being reduced to abject poverty; when one stormy night a traveller made his appearance, and begged earnestly for shelter and refreshment. The stranger's dress and *tout ensemble* betokened opulent circumstances; his heavy saddle-bags (for he was on horseback) seemed full of money, so that the demon of Waldheim's avarice was once more roused. He received his guest with the most specious courtesy; and within the next hour he had entered into an agreement with his wife and sons that the

man should be murdered, and his property seized. The deed soon followed; and, with a view to concealment in this instance, he prepared a deep grave in a thicket of the neighbouring forest, to which, with the help of his eldest son, he carried the body. Now, however, it was the will of Providence that he should be discovered. A passenger, who had watched him occupied in this abominable task, came up boldly and questioned him what was the matter. Waldheim, in order to screen himself effectually, would instantly have murdered this intruder, but the latter, being well armed, was provided against any such attack. He assured the criminal, nevertheless, that, if allowed to share in the booty, he would henceforth preserve inviolable secrecy as to what he had then witnessed. Waldheim was of course under the necessity of assenting, and the bribed villain soon made it known that he also was by no means disinclined to such exploits, if only the spoils were sufficient to counterbalance the risk and trouble. This person was the detestable landlord of that inn where the ghost appeared to me. In a short time, the two miscreants were on confidential terms with each other; and not only did the innkeeper

assist Waldheim with servants, who were bound on oath, and on pain of death, to conceal whatever might occur, but came personally on the field when the *corps* of his worthy partner was not sufficiently effective. To prevent discovery, he took special care never to make his own inn the scene of action, but for the most part served as a watchful spy, and gave notice to Waldheim when travellers were on the road who had with them any large sum of money. The innkeeper's wife was also an accomplice, but his daughter, who had been educated in the family of a worthy and conscientious aunt, was wholly ignorant of these atrocities.

It was proved that, in a course of eight or ten years, more than fifty people had been assassinated by these outlaws. The ruinous building in which I spent the night had been possessed and occupied by a certain miller; a man of good character, of whose voluntary connivance at such transactions there was no hope,—he was therefore looked on by this gang as a very troublesome neighbour, and, in order to be rid of him, they contrived, by various stratagems, to make it appear that his house was haunted. The loneli-

ness of its situation favoured this undertaking, and by degrees they terrified the superstitious man so much, that, being completely tired of this residence, he sold his lease of the mill to Waldheim for a mere trifle; and the stories of ghosts were henceforth so industriously spread through the neighbourhood, that it was never wondered at if the building was left deserted and in disuse. It served the assassins thereafter as a regular place of rendezvous and concealment.

For my escape from the fate that otherwise awaited me, I was indebted to Waldheim's younger son. This youth had never taken any active share in his father's crimes, though he had been bound by a solemn oath, like the others, to preserve secrecy. Towards me as his godfather, he cherished, from earliest youth, some feelings of attachment and respect, which were increased by my well-intended offer to take him into my house as a clerk. He had been aware of the plot laid against my life, but would not, without betraying his father, give me any direct information. With the innkeeper's house, however, he was well acquainted; and as there existed a love affair betwixt him and the girl whom I have already men-

tioned, he happened to be there at the time of my arrival, and afterwards made use of a private door, which I had not discovered, in order to appear like a ghost, and warn me against trusting again to Waldheim's hospitality. With the same view, also, he had made use of the opportunity, when I was in the landlord's room, to enter mine, and draw the slugs from my pistols, so that, if I had fired at the intruder, he would not have sustained any injury. Thus he was my protector from otherwise inevitable destruction; and became, in consequence, the cause of his father's guilt being duly punished.

It was impossible that Waldheim could deny or extenuate the many proofs that were brought against him; and circumstances came to light of a description so new and horrible, that every one shuddered at the bare idea of such enormities. On account of many additional witnesses, and other instances of persons who had mysteriously disappeared in the forest, the trial was lengthened out, and it was not till a year had passed over, that judgment was pronounced, which was afterwards duly ratified by our sovereign. Waldheim and the innkeeper, with their wives, were broken

on the wheel; Waldheim's elder son was punished in like manner; the servants and other accomplices were beheaded with the sword, and their bodies nailed to the wheel. As for the young girl, she was of course pronounced innocent; but her lover, though by silence only he had rendered himself an accomplice, was awarded ten years' imprisonment in the house of correction. Even that decree, in consideration of his having saved my life, was changed into a sentence of two years' confinement only. The fortunes of this youth and his wife (for he was at length married to the innkeeper's daughter) will one day fill another story.

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

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